

MAY 2020 £1

# COMMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCHES IN TRING



# High Street Baptist Church - Tring

Growing in the message and challenge of God



Although we are not meeting physically at this time, we continue to 'be' church. Please join us at our prayer meetings or use the links for resources and to stay connected.

Don't hesitate to get in touch if you need pastoral support.

Church office admin@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk  
Revd Joe Egan 07521 513493 or joe@tringbaptistchurch.co.uk  
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[www.tringbaptistchurch.co.uk](http://www.tringbaptistchurch.co.uk)

Tringbaptistchurch High Street Baptist Church

## For kids' activities, links and resources:

Kids Activities @High Street Baptist Church  
Tring - Art In Your Window 2020

## Worship at home

Visit our website for

Worship at Home resources

[www.tringbaptistchurch.co.uk/services/sermons/](http://www.tringbaptistchurch.co.uk/services/sermons/)



We have a 'Worship at Home' WhatsApp group to

help us stay connected with one another. Please email us with your mobile phone number if you would like to be added to the group.



## Editorial



You can also 'go to the theatre' and to the gym (and many other things too, I

We are still in lockdown; but we still have church (albeit in a different way) and we still have Comment (for as long as people continue to write articles to share with others).

am told) virtually. But the new division in society is the haves and have not as regards a device that allows you to access these things.

Can you help us reach those who would usually pick up their copy of Comment in Church and are therefore not on our subscription list? Can you ask someone who usually has a printed copy if they would be willing to share their email address with us? We are determined to continue to make

Comment available to as many as want it but need your help to find out who they are. We hope to be back to normal later this year but for now we need information to ensure people receive Comment either as a posted copy or by email. Please contact me.

And a big Thank You to Janet Goodyer for most of the cover photos taken on her daily exercise walk!

**The Editor**

## Singing the Lord's Song in a strange land



The Israelites in the Babylonian captivity had to learn to sing the Lord's song in a strange land. We, too, are learning to 'be church' locked into our own homes. As we began the lockdown at the end of March, we had lots of volunteers looking for things to do. In particular, we had year 13 students who had suddenly found themselves at a loose end. Having been studying hard for so long, they now found themselves not being able to go to school and having no exams to prepare for. This meant that we were able to stand down our loyal 70-plus-year-old volunteers who normally deliver Comment. Therefore, in a world turned upside-down, there was one point of normality. Comment magazine was hand-delivered around our community. Since then the restrictions have become tighter and at the point of

typing we are no longer able to deliver in this way: we need to leave that to the Post Office. That means you are either reading this online or you have had an issue posted to you. The point of continuing to strive to get Comment out is that, for any community, communication is vital.

Covid-19 has created strange dynamics around communication. Firstly there is communicating when you are out and about. Walking around town for one's permitted exercise, if one sees a familiar face the temptation is to draw near to chat; but instead we draw away from each other. As we walk down the pavement and a stranger approaches, we are forced to move apart. It makes communicating all the more vital. Whilst we might smile and say a cheery hello, the physical act of moving away appears to communicate the direct opposite message.

Then there is Tesco (or your supermarket of choice), normally a place where one can see a hundred different

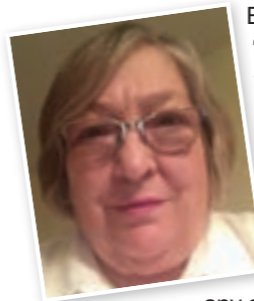
conversations blocking the aisles. Now we shuffle round in single file avoiding each other. As for Hangouts, Teams and Zoom, well, my computer will go out of the window soon. My admiration for those who have to do their daily work using video conferencing grows as my exasperation increases. I won't even mention what it is like to do all of our church services via YouTube.

Instead let us celebrate Comment. We got it to you last month and even if you are missing your paper copy, at least the electronic version has a reassuringly familiar feel. You will see familiar faces and 'hear' their voices. If you have a paper copy this time but could cope with an electronic version for a few months, please contact the Editor at [comment.magazine@gmail.com](mailto:comment.magazine@gmail.com) and we will save the printed copies for those who cannot access them any other way.

Communication is a vital part of community and Comment plays a part in that.

**Huw Bellis, Tring Team**

## Random acts of kindness



Being an elderly 'at risk' person, I finally took the good advice to stay at home over these past few weeks, go out for some exercise but avoid entering any shops or buildings unless absolutely vital. I had no need to worry, though, as I received several texts and phone calls from friends and acquaintances offering their help with shopping. Even a passing couple, walking their dog, offered to help me and gave me their mobile number. My

next-door neighbours are very helpful too. There are certainly many kind, loving people in Tring!

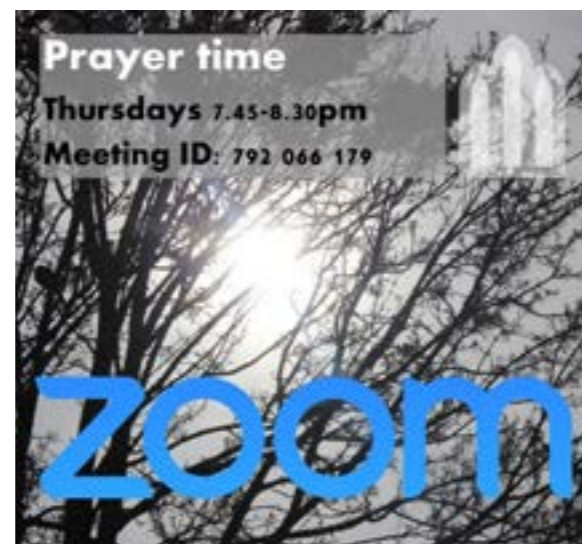
Although alone and self-isolating, I've managed to enjoy a friendly chat with the occasional passers-by as they stop at the end of my path when I'm outside my front door. This also occurs when my friends bring me my shopping. I've also been having many outgoing and incoming telephone calls with friends and relatives during this awful Coronavirus pandemic.

During the second week of lockdown I received a phone call from Toby at Beechwood Fine Foods to offer me a food parcel which a very generous, kind lady (who wished to remain anonymous)

had paid for. When it arrived, it contained Toby's homemade soup, cheese on toast, a coffee, a generous slice of Sarah's coffee cake and a pot of her homemade marmalade, a tea cake and a box of Beeches ginger chocolates. I really appreciated this generous gift and requested Toby to thank the anonymous donor for her very kind generosity.

Modern technology is amazing! With some help from Michelle Grace over the telephone, I'm glad that I managed to locate the recorded video weekly services on my iPad as they are of great help at this time.

**Bea Bingham  
St Peter & St Paul**



## Excellent as usual!

Thank you for the latest edition of Comment – excellent as usual.

My wife and I moved to Wimborne four years ago after having lived in Tring for over forty years and (perhaps),

needless to say, it was a big wrench. We have a daughter living here which made the move much easier than it would otherwise have been, but now, after four years, we are very settled. It's a great

part of the country and Dorset has so much to offer.

**David Long**  
formerly *St Peter & St Paul*

## The Bishop's Coronavirus Golden Rules



### Golden Rule One

Each one of us can think about how we can protect and support our neighbours. So much of the public rhetoric is sowing fear about the danger of other people.

So, taking all the official precautions, offer help and reassurance to others – and don't demonise anyone or any group.

### Golden Rule Two

Think about who may be suffering more than me. For those of us who are healthy there is much less to worry about but the elderly, the housebound and those

with chronic health conditions may be very anxious. How about each church undertaking an audit of all the vulnerable people they know and sharing out the responsibility to phone them each day? There's nothing like a friendly voice to offer solace when someone is worried. A smile can bring cheer, even on the phone. If you visit, follow all the official precautions or don't go.

### Golden Rule Three

Don't give into panic and start hoarding food. There is plenty to go around, so practise the Christian discipline of sharing. Ask your neighbours what they need and do your best to help them get it. If you are self-isolating you will of course need some supplies.

### Golden Rule Four

Live today to the full. None of us ever know what the future holds. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:25-34), Jesus challenged his followers to live each day fully and not be afraid. Every time we are tempted to give in to fear, we need to make a conscious choice to respond in trust and openness. And, along with just over half the adults in the UK, don't forget to pray. Here's a suggestion from the Revd Louise Collins, a Team Vicar in Borehamwood, Herts: Dear God, our Shield and our Defender, guide and protect my neighbours in this time of health emergency; deliver them from all harm and may your love and care ever grow in this place.

**Bishop Alan, St Albans Cathedral**

## Day 30 of 'no alcohol' for Lent



I thought that giving up alcohol for Lent would be hard. I've never tried it before. I'm not sure why, but I have a sneaking suspicion it was because I was worried that I was drinking too much, worried that alcohol would be hard to give up and worried what this admission would say about me.

You may notice a theme developing already: 'I was worried that...' Well, what do you expect! I am a woman, in my 50s, assailed 24/7 by news and advertising designed to worry me. I've just googled 'The effects of drinking alcohol' and the results were: increased belly fat, ages your appearance, slows your metabolism, liver damage, 'Wine goes to your brain' (!). No positives there.

Also, Mr Google, 'How many glasses of wine can I drink a week?' and the results ranged from 'three drinks spread over the week' to 'a bottle of wine a day

won't do you any harm'. Don't fret, I do know what the NHS recommends, but there is a huge variety in opinion 'out there', so no wonder I worry.

Anyway, I did it – I gave up alcohol for Lent.

And – I'm almost disappointed to report – it wasn't hard at all. Be advised that the 0% alcohol wine I bought was disgusting. Grape juice, no matter how hard the manufacturer tries to dress it up in a fancy bottle, is just a sweet drink.



But cold water, fresh from the fridge, is the best drink in the world. You probably already know that.

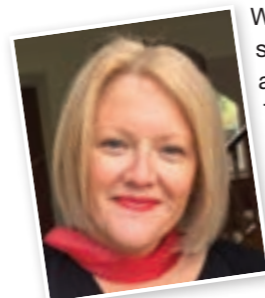
However, even though giving up was easy, I have not found any of the expected advantages. 'Able to focus more on God.' Nope. 'Leap out of bed full of energy in the morning?' Nope. 'Look younger and slimmer?' Nope. 'Complete waste of time then?' No. The experience has been valuable.

Huw Bellis' 29 March sermon included the thought that 'letting go of one thing allows us to focus on something else more important than ourselves'. Jane Banister's Ash Wednesday sermon challenged us to 'Look to the Lord, not relying totally on oneself'.

What I've learnt this Lent is that, for me, 'giving up things' is much easier than 'giving up thinking the world revolves around me'. I approached this Easter with a clearer realisation that the world revolves around God.

**Vivianne Child**  
*St Peter & St Paul*

## Being a Clergy kid



Whilst I've been busy settling into my role as curate in the Tring Team Parish, my two sons have also experienced quite a number of changes along the way too. They've

moved to a new house, changed schools and left friends behind – a completely new environment for them.



### 'How have they dealt with all this change?', I hear you ask!

Well, here are some questions that I posed to Samuel (aged 10) and Noah (aged 7), on what it's like being the children of a Rev!

### How are you settling in since your move to Tring?

**S** – I'm finding it OK; yes, I'm happy.  
**N** – Yep, me too.

### Have you found anything tricky or difficult?

**S** – Yes, finding new friends at school and starting over has been scary at times. Also, lots of people know us: sometimes it feels like we are celebrities and we get a lot of attention; it's a bit embarrassing sometimes.  
**N** – I don't mind the attention; it's OK.

### What have you enjoyed or liked the most?

**S** – It's a new environment for us to explore. It's not like the old place, everything is new. Now we get out more and get our legs moving. I liked moving house, because now I get to have my own room without my brother (no offence to him!). I like the space to read quietly, write stories and draw. I like my new football team too.  
**N** – I liked finding new friends at school and church. I like my own bedroom but sometimes go into Samuel's room to play. I like my space to do my own art, build Lego and play games.

### How did you feel when I said I was going to be a Vicar?

**S** – Not sure, in the middle. We realised every Sunday we'd have to go to Church – every week! It's good to be polite and nice to people. I was proud of you when you went to Vicar school and at your ordination.

**N** – A little bit happy. Sad because you were at Vicar school a lot and I missed you.

### Is it better or worse than you thought? Why?

**S** – I get to see you more, which is better.  
**N** – Yes, me too.

### What's the best thing about being the child of a Rev?

**S** – I like seeing you at the front of Church speaking to everyone and then you turn and secretly smile at just me.  
**N** – When you smile at me in Church. Plus, we always get biscuits at the end of the service.

### What's the best thing about Tring?

**S** – I love the bread in M&S! I like the barbers in Tring too. I also really love walking around Tring Park.  
**N** – I like playing in my garden and visiting my friends. I love Tring Museum and exploring all the different floors with my brother.



### What are you going to do while you're off school?

**S** – Nintendo switch, play piano, go outside, play hide and seek.  
**N** – Have fun! Bounce on my trampoline!

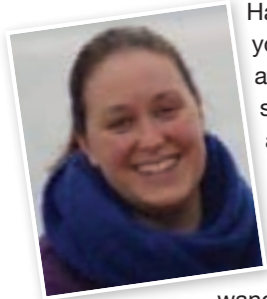
### What advice would you give any other clergy children?

**S** – Don't say bad words! Be kind to each other. Even if your mum or dad are on the phone to other people for a really long time, they do still love you.  
**N** – Be good to your brother or sister.

### If you prayed to God right now, what would you say?

**S** – I would pray for all the people in the world who have Coronavirus and ask that they are cured.  
**N** – I would pray for people who had no food and ask that people who have lots share with them.  
Amen  
**Sarah Marshall**  
*Tring Team*

# Seeing God in the everyday



Have you ever found yourself looking at something seemingly mundane and ordinary and realising that, provoked by what you are looking at, your mind has

wandered to thoughts of God? Maybe a buzzing bumblebee has crossed your path on a walk and drawn your focus onto the incredible design of creation illustrated by nature; or the sight and sound of children laughing in a neighbour's garden has reminded you of the innocent delight that we can experience through child-like fun and humour. Perhaps while baking a cake and watching it rise, memories of Bible passages about the need for patience until the right time when all is perfectly ready, come flooding back from days in Sunday school when you were young; or, as you pour yourself a glass of water, you recall Bible words such as, 'Come to me all who are thirsty' and reflect on the ways in which you need refreshing in your life today. (This is to name just a few examples... but there are many, many more I'm sure.)

In my experience, God has a funny way of taking everyday items and experiences in our lives and using them to prompt our thoughts to be lifted out of our current circumstances (even if just momentarily) and to consider things from his perspective. We can be inspired to find light even in the most challenging of situations through glimpses of hope and encouragement that grab our attention even when we are not particularly looking for it.

During the recent months of 'lockdown', we challenged our church family to actively seek and find godly inspiration in everyday items that surround them in their homes and daily routines. Though everyone's lives were being disrupted by the pandemic which we were all experiencing, we believed that we could each find light in the darkness and encourage one another with it along the way. Therefore,

we issued a call to our members to photograph, video and share their discoveries with us; and together we went on a journey of exploration together, as we invited God to speak to us in new ways through the everyday objects we see around us.

As you might imagine, there have been many varied thoughts shared between us as a result, and unfortunately not enough room to share them all here (you'll have to go and check out our High Street Baptist Church Facebook feed: <https://www.facebook.com/High-Street-Baptist-Church-164135853596490/>)



or ask one of us to share some more with you if those I mention here seem insufficient). However, the creativity that we encountered as we opened our eyes wider to look more closely around us was profound, and a noteworthy encouragement to others, I believe.

In a season of difficulty when social distancing is compulsory, we were enabled to find common ground through collective reflection on mundane household items that we were each surrounded by in our individual homes.

Though we were all separated somewhat by our circumstances, we found unity in mutual encouragement by pointing out glimpses of God seen in and around us. In this sense, the walls between us were removed in a strange sort of way, as we gleaned fresh spiritual inspiration from our renewed insights into ordinary life.

Truly, our eyes were opened in a time of suffering to still see the presence of God revealing light in our darkness, to lift our spirits and feed our souls. Even just in the first few days of our setting this goal for ourselves, people began communicating frequently about those

things that had drawn their eye and lightened their load in the midst of their struggles with the situation.

Here are a few examples of comments that flowed: a bird singing before dawn reminding that the light of dawn would indeed come; signs of normal growth even in this strange time of desolation (pictured above); a note from an unknown neighbour offering help, and a smile from a stranger cultivating new connections despite distance; a sound of applause for those working hard

on our behalf, reminding us to be grateful for those things and people unseen striving to pull us through; a long time standing in a queue at the supermarket prompting someone to use this unusual delay of necessity as a prayer walk opportunity.

When I originally introduced this challenge, I shared about my thoughts as I looked at the clock on our lounge wall. My mind had been focused on the God I believe in, who is unrestricted by time and who sees all that we've already been through and all that is still to come. As my son's clock indicated day and night to me (pictured below), I pondered how this cycle continuously rolls on without end, indicating that light continues to break through into darkness; and there is sunlight shining or being reflected somewhere all the time. Just as God is always with us, the clock ticking was a reminder of the heartbeat of God's love that remains constant, relentless and unstoppable, whether we are paying attention to it or not.

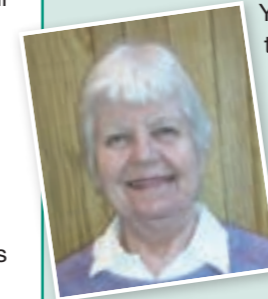


It has been said that when some of our senses are restricted, then others are heightened, and it seems to me that as our activity has been forcefully adjusted in recent months, it has provided us with an opportunity to focus on allowing our vision to be magnified and our capacity for reflection upon the everyday to be expanded. Even our openness to discovering the unknown as a community has been challenged, and we are richer for it.

Therefore, may I encourage you to consider how God can speak to you through the ordinary items you see every day, and share them with others (and us), so that we might inspire one another to keep looking up in times when we are tempted to simply look down. There are always things that we can find to shine light into our darkness if we look hard enough, but I believe that sometimes it helps if others draw our attention to something we may have previously overlooked.

**Ruth Egan, High Street Baptist Church**

# World Day of Prayer



You may recall that this year the World Day of Prayer service was written by the ladies of Zimbabwe on the theme 'Rise! Take your Mat and Walk'.

The quotation comes from the story in John 5:2-9a. The lame man cannot get into the pool to be healed. He sounds powerless. Jesus asks him 'Do you want to be made well?' It is an interesting question which we could ask ourselves at many times, a self-reflecting question to which God needs an answer. Jesus asks this in compassion making no mention of the obstacles that may be in the way. When he has the positive answer, Jesus says 'Rise, Take your mat and walk'. Three actions – Rise, Take, Walk.

In the service booklets we read the following: 'Rise' means we can stand up, be on an equal level with others and look them in the eye. 'Take your mat' means we are ready to be part of the working world and the community. 'Walk' means we must be ready to take steps of faith which can lead to personal and social transformation.

One part of the service asked us to make a commitment to our community. Full of good intentions, I meant to write this immediately after the service which was held on 6 March, before all the restrictions on our lives came into place. Reflecting on the service now, there is

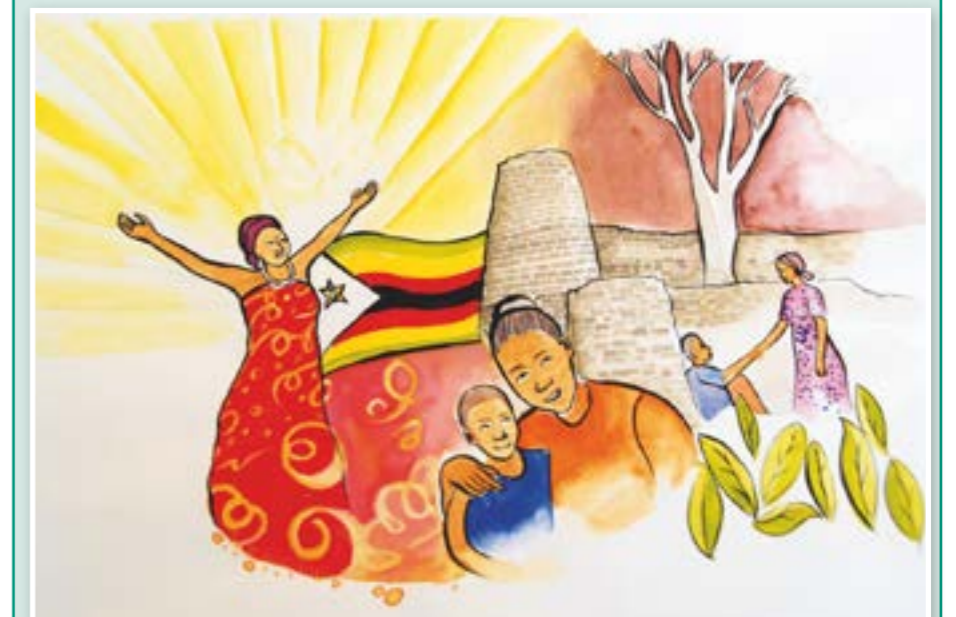
so much we can and need to do to help the community. Coronavirus is such a leveller. It pays no heed to status, colour, creed or where we are. 'Doing things' seems now to be 'Not doing things'. I prefer to look at the positive aspect. We isolate to help others survive; we shop sensibly to make sure there is enough to go around; we pray because, through God, that reaches all the places we cannot reach that need his love and our love. Today I pray for Zimbabwe because yesterday I read that the doctors there were refusing to work until they had protective clothing. Tomorrow the situation will be different.

I come back to the question Jesus asked, 'Do you want to be made well?' and address it to society. Within that context we all have to 'Rise! Take our mats and walk'. It matters so much now, and there is an urgency in what we do, but we do it in faith knowing that our Lord is with us.

Thank you to all who came to the service this year. Thank you for your donations which enabled me to send £192 to the World Day of Prayer organisation. The money is distributed to several charities and it will be greatly needed this year.

I don't like ending with a financial comment: sometimes it seems as though the whole world is reduced to economics. My prayer for everyone is that they forget their fears. Feeling the presence of God beside us can only dispel fear and bring peace. May you feel his presence!

**Jill Smith, St Peter & St Paul**



# Children's rights & the quest for social justice



The Justice & Peace Group were very pleased to host a talk at High Street Baptist Church on 7 January by Andy Lillicrap, co-founder of One Sky

Foundation, which supports vulnerable children and families in Thailand.

Volunteers from this country are often attracted to the idea of volunteering in an orphanage in a country such as Thailand. But 'orphanages' are not always what they seem. Many are privately-operated and not subject to the scrutiny and safeguarding that we have been accustomed to in this country. Moreover such 'orphanages' do not necessarily mean that the children there have no parents.



The One Sky Foundation, based in Sangkhlaburi District, Western Thailand near the border with Myanmar (Burma) found that all of the seventeen privately-operated children's homes there are not legally registered. Results of their analysis of these unregistered homes (UPCHs) were that 90% of the children reported having at least one living parent; 95% of the children were previously living with family; 65% of the children stated they had contact with parents or family within the last 12 months; only one of the homes was aware of national law, Thailand's Child Protection Act 2003, and global guidelines and United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child for child protection; only four of the homes had a child protection policy in place; of the nine homes that used volunteers, only two reported conducting background checks on volunteers to ensure appropriate skills and no previous criminal offences against children.

As LUMOS, an organisation founded by J.K Rowling, says, in an institution a child is robbed of their identity and reduced to a number. With little physical and emotional contact, a child can soon forget what it is like to be loved. A woman brought up in an orphanage will be ten times more likely to be involved in prostitution; someone brought up in an orphanage will be forty times more likely to have a criminal record and 500 times more likely to commit suicide.

When One Sky went on to investigate the position in the whole of Thailand, they found that 240 unregistered, private children's homes were believed to be currently operating there. The primary reason was found to be due to the lack of access to education, the parents being too poor to pay for this. The organisation LUMOS also found that extreme poverty is the main reason children are placed in 'orphanages'. This is a global problem

with 8 million children and young people living in institutions worldwide.

What can be done to alleviate this poverty and thus prevent these children having to be sent away?

## Education

In 2019 One Sky provided 144 students with monthly scholarships to attend Sangkhlaburi High School covering transport and lunch costs. Some of these students and over fifty other students also received help to buy their school uniforms.

## Medical needs

Patients in the Thai hospital system rely on family and friends to care for them while they are undergoing treatment. Food and basic care must be provided by the family of the patient. This can be a huge task for parents of children with chronic conditions. Migrant parents on low incomes are often forced to borrow

money at high rates of interest while they stop working to care for children in hospital. A large proportion of One Sky's welfare budget in 2019 was spent to keep some of these children alive.

## Food-production

Since June 2019, One Sky has been busy inspiring the community with a new initiative: home-based food production which involves teaching skills and providing resources to families to help them grow food or raise animals near their homes.

## Care reform in Thailand

In order to strengthen their voice and hope to be a catalyst for change, One Sky has joined the Convention on the Rights of the Child Coalition Thailand and will open an office in Chiang Mai where there are the greatest number of private children's homes.

## Latest news from the United Nations

Last December a landmark resolution was passed by the UN whereby all member nations recognised the worldwide over-reliance on children's homes and committed to tackling it.

**Michael Demidecki**  
**Justice & Peace Group affiliated to Churches Together in Tring**  
[www.justiceandpeacetring.org](http://www.justiceandpeacetring.org)

In Thailand, institutional care in the form of private children's homes, is consistently being used as a first option for children when their families are having problems. One Sky as child rights professionals and care specialists want to invert the funding pyramid. They want to refocus the immense amount of money being invested in private children's homes and redirect it to increase family support services and family-based care options.

The UN Guidelines tell us that when children do need to be removed from their families, this should be for as short a time as possible, while time and energy is invested in fixing the problems that led to the separation. Helping families in this way is called family support. Family-based care options such as kinship care and foster care should always be the first choice for children, with children's homes being the very last resort.

# Empty chairs at empty tables



The last two weeks of March were, without a doubt, the most challenging and strange of my career to-date. The Government announced that schools were to close their doors at the end of the day on Friday 20 March, except to those children whose parents are critical in the battle against Covid-19.

A school without children is a very strange place. It doesn't feel right. It jars. The silence in the classrooms, shared areas and staffroom is deafening. Teaching spaces look sad with empty chairs at empty tables. The phone in the office isn't ringing and the email is unnaturally quiet. The soul of the building, for the time being, has gone away.

For some of our children, Friday 20

March may well have been their last day at Bishop Wood School. We hope to see our amazing Year 6 children again but there is every chance that their next school day will be at a new school. You have to feel sorry for them. This terrible virus may well have robbed them of some of their most eagerly anticipated school moments including the week in Swanage, the Leavers' Production and the end of Year 6 Party. Time will tell, but we desperately hope to see them again this side of the summer holidays.

We are, as mentioned above, still open for the children of key workers. These children have been incredible. It is so strange for them. The skeleton staff who are looking after them have put together an engaging curriculum. Teachers and TAs are supporting them in their learning. Every member of the admin team is on the rota to cover the front office. Our caretaker is locking and unlocking every day and keeping the

place safe for everyone. Teachers who can't be in school are busy planning home learning tasks for their pupils. Everyone is playing their part. The governors have been supportive and helpful as I put together a plan for this strange period in our history.

Let me level with you: it is no secret that school closures are quite often greeted with a tangible sense of joy by the staff. Usually, it has dumped down with snow or the heating has broken. Usually, school will be closed for a matter of days. Usually, nobody is at risk of any harm or worse. This closure is different and it was received differently by the teachers and staff. All were aware that this closure has no definite end point. All were aware of the risks. Our lovely little community has been torn apart but it will come back together and hopefully soon.

**Gary Stanley, Headteacher**  
**Bishop Wood Junior School**

# Letter from Orkney



I sit writing this piece at the end of March and I pray that by the time you read it in May, the world will be a different and calmer place. The Covid-19 lockdown has been in place for a week now, but as I live with a 'vulnerable' person, which is not a word those who know Mac would usually use to describe him, we have been self-isolating for two weeks now. There are at least another ten weeks to go. Deep joy.

Even on a quiet and remote island like Orkney the differences are noticeable. The initial trickle of tourists who started appearing at the beginning of March have disappeared; and, as the island is inaccessible to everyone except residents and essential workers, the sense of isolation is profound. Spring is springing though and, with virtually no traffic or aircraft noise, the sound of birdlife and livestock is loud and wonderful. I wonder if it has been the same in Tring without, as I recall, the distant hum of the A41 as that constant presence.

There is a slight feeling of what I imagine the Blitz spirit would have been like when it comes to food supplies.

Being allowed to only shop occasionally for basic essentials led me to think about a recipe that can be concocted from store cupboard ingredients. My mother's corned beef hash sprang to mind. I think everyone has their own version of this classic dish, and I certainly never saw one similar to hers. However, I always enjoyed it as a great comfort dish – very important at times like this.

**Carrie Dodge, St Mary's, Stromness**

## Shirley's Corned Beef Hash (Serves 2)

### Ingredients:

1 tblsp olive oil  
1 onion, sliced  
150gm sliced fresh mushrooms (or dried, soaked and chopped)  
400gm tin chopped tomatoes  
1 tsp mixed dried herbs  
Worcester sauce – 2 to 3 shakes  
Red wine (optional) – a good splash  
Beef stock cube  
200gm tin corned beef

### For the mash:

800gm potatoes, peeled and cut into quarters (or use packet mash if no fresh potatoes available)  
100ml milk  
25gm butter  
100gm cheddar cheese, grated



### Method:

1. Heat oven to 200C/180 fan/400F/gas mark 6.
2. Heat the oil in a frying pan. Add the onions and mushrooms and gently fry until softened.
3. Tip in the tinned tomatoes, mixed herbs, Worcester sauce, wine and sprinkle the stock cube over. Stir all together, turn up the heat until bubbling then reduce heat and simmer until the liquid has reduced and everything has melded together.
4. Bring the potatoes to the boil in salted water and simmer until soft. Drain them well and allow to dry for around 5 minutes. Add the milk, butter and half of the cheese to the potatoes and mash well, then season with salt and pepper. Alternatively, use packet mash according to the instructions, not forgetting to add the cheese.
5. Cut the corned beef into 3cm slices.
6. Place the tomato mixture over the base of a shallow dish. Cover the layer with corned beef slices and spread the mash over. Grate the remainder of the cheese over the top.
7. Bake in the oven for 20 minutes or until golden and bubbling. Serve with green vegetables, or something else if you don't like greens!

## Lessons from life



A couple of days ago Annette asked me to write an article for the upcoming edition of Comment. 'A couple of days' is a long time at the moment – indeed

it has been for most of this curious year – and we certainly live in 'interesting times'.

The aptly named year – 2020 – is arguably a good time to consider the difference between hindsight and foresight. Hindsight, of course, is always perfect but foresight is seldom anywhere near accurate. Who would ever have thought at the beginning of the year (when news of the first Coronavirus outbreak in China was starting to come out) that what is happening right now would ever happen? Who can say what will have happened between my writing this article today and the way the world looks when it actually gets published?

I well recall the last Sunday before Lent when Huw preached on Jesus' advice 'not to worry about tomorrow'. It now seems a long time ago.

It also seems a long time ago to the time between October and March which I spent worrying frantically about what seemed, at the time, significant business issues – almost impossible to resolve. Right now, those issues (which caused me great anxiety) have been set aside and larger concerns have taken over for us all.

Right now, we are all living through a very significant lesson of life, and whatever worrying we may do, it really won't make that much difference. We just have to get on with it.

How different the world seems now to the way we might have expected it to be.

Many years ago, when I first 'retired

from the day job' I wrote a book. I approached it as a major project and actually finished it before setting it aside to get on with more important-seeming projects. After about 600 pages I decided I didn't really like it all that much! It had a great title though 'Genghis Khan in Chicago'. It was all about what was really happening in the world (as such books tend to be) and it contained a very interesting plot line involving the invention of a viral plague designed to wipe out China. Of course, it wasn't intended to attack everybody else as well!

Again, that all seems a long time ago.

Rather more recently I remember being ribbed by the ever-jovial Didier Jaquet for my fixation with the Dalai Lama and his approach to the simple religion of kindness. 'My religion is kindness... I don't need a Church; I don't need services... I just need to be kind. I can always be kind.'

Right now, that seems to be exactly what our church communities are doing themselves. Churches may be closed, services may be cancelled (or virtual) and normal life is suspended; but as a community, we're all focused on trying to be as kind, thoughtful and helpful as possible to other humans.

This morning, Annunciation Day, I am sure that many in our community followed the suggestion of the Pope to join in with the Lord's Prayer across all Christian communities at 11.00am GMT. Such initiatives of shared religious faith are an important part of trying to cope with the horrors of the current time. They transcend the differences between us

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**Barry Child**  
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and join us together.

I feel sure that in the coming weeks and months communities will come together and individuals will look out for each other in ways that will be not only very helpful in themselves but very rewarding for our emotional wellbeing.

Of course, Jesus of Nazareth knew that all this kind of thing was actually the stuff of life. The parable of the rich man building bigger barns but not realising that his time was up is very telling. Jesus' advice for us not to worry but to put our trust in God is all we can follow.

Martin Luther said it very succinctly: 'Do not worry. Pray, pray a lot, and let God do the worrying.' I guess like Mary, on Annunciation Day more than 2000 years ago, all we can do today is listen to God's voice and do the best we can.

One of the things I often quote at funerals is the definition of a 'life-well-lived' given by John Wesley: 'Do all the good you can, to all the people you can, at all the times you can, in all the places you can, in all the ways you can, as long as ever you can.' A lesson for us all from a 'life well-lived'.

Right now, I guess we are all learning new and surprising lessons every day.

**Grahame Senior**  
**Tring Team**

## Martin Luther on Covid-19



Rosemary Green, widow of the late Revd Michael Green and a member of Spencer's church, kindly sent in this quote from Martin Luther, about how he responded to the plague of 1527: 'I shall ask

*God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance inflict and pollute others and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me and I have done what*

*he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbour needs me... I will go freely. I see this as such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God.'*

That has a contemporary ring to it!  
**David Sands**  
**St Martha's Methodist Church**

## Get creative!



Art is not just for kids. Some of us regularly draw, paint or craft and value it enormously. Often doing these activities alone, we cannot only feel a sense of calm and achievement,

but the experience can be one of contemplation. For others, however, we might not have used a paint brush since school and the idea of 'doing art' is farthest from our minds.

I love to pray to our 'Creator God'. I like to remember that he created the earth, and us, for his glory. The word 'creator' is so much more expressive than



'maker': it suggests an ability to shape, mould and transform and it implies some freedom in the process. I am sure if you ask someone who is creating something what they are making, they don't really know until it's finished! If we are created in the image of God, then surely we are creative beings.

This verse from Exodus tells us about the God-given creative skills and talents of Bezalel and Oholiab, which they are to share with others for the glorification of God: 'He has filled them with skill to do all kinds of work as engravers, designers, embroiderers in blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen, and weavers – all of them skilled workers and designers.' Exodus 35:35 (NIV).

Creativity can take many forms:

sewing, writing, painting, drawing, gardening... the list is endless. Our children's worker, Carolyn Boulton, has been encouraging us all to get creative during the recent change



in circumstances. She launched the Facebook group 'Tring - Art In Your Window 2020', to encourage us to put artwork in our windows for others to enjoy when they are out walking (keeping 2 metres away from anyone else). Rainbows have been popular in all shapes and forms, but the artwork can be anything!

So, if you do not consider yourself 'creative', I encourage you to give it a go! Follow this activity and other useful links on these Facebook pages: Kids Activities @ High Street Baptist Church Tring; Tring – Art In Your Window 2020. (The photos are from posts on Tring - Art In Your Window 2020 public Facebook page.)

**Polly Eaton**  
**High Street Baptist Church**

## A warm welcome to our wedding couples



On 8 March, almost before any mention of Covid-19, Tring Team Parish held its fourth 'Wedding Welcome'. This is now a Spring tradition where we welcome future wedding couples to a friendly and marriage-affirming church service, followed by a get-together to talk about their wedding plans, finishing off with a large lunch. The event is an enjoyable part of our marriage-ministry and something that is much appreciated by our wedding couples.

This year we welcomed eleven wedding couples from across the team, plus Bruce and Lynne Sherring-Lucas who are planning a renewal of their wedding vows in June. There was a great buzz in the room as everyone swapped information and had the chance to ask Michelle, Sarah and Huw all those questions that they were too nervous to ask before. I led the discussion, Barry cooked a splendid lunch and Tring

Brewery provided the beer – what's not to like!

During the discussion-part of the event we asked people to talk in small groups about why they chose to get married in church. The replies are fascinating; ranging from 'church and our faith is very important to us and we wouldn't get married

anywhere else' to the bluntly honest 'the building will make a nice backdrop to the photographs'. All reasons are fine with us... we just want to share the building and share God's love for marriage with everyone that finds their way to the Tring Team Parish.

However, underneath all the shopping and the 'to do' lists there was an overwhelming spirit of caring for their guests, concern for relatives travelling from far-afield and wanting to make the day special for them too. All the wedding



couples were charming people and I think the future of marriage is safe in their hands.

### Postscript

It's now 29 March and our wedding couples face the possibility of postponing their wedding celebrations because of Covid-19 restrictions. Please think of them and pray for them if they have to change their plans.

**Vivianne Child**  
**St Peter & St Paul**

## In difficult times



I am writing this on 24 March, the first day of the official 'lockdown' imposed by the UK government in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It will be some time before readers see it, but

I strongly suspect that it will be just as relevant in May as it is today. Churches in Tring, and across the country, have responded imaginatively and creatively to the developing crisis and, for many of us, technology has become a source of great blessing as we can access not only the unfolding news but also, and even more importantly, our far-flung family members and our church families. Seeing friends and relatives live on our screens reinforces the importance of maintaining and nurturing our relationships in this difficult time.

I have been enjoying reading some of the blogs posted by friends, including those from Canon Giles Goddard, the Vicar at St John's, Waterloo, in London. Giles is a tireless activist on climate change and equality and someone who also manages to radiate a sense of calm and peace. His church in one of the busiest parts of the capital has open doors: it is a community arts hub with a full programme of events; it hosts a food bank; it is a refuge for the homeless; and it was a shelter and place of rest and welcome for Extinction Rebellion participants during the mass actions of last year. But now things are very different and, like so many others, Giles' community outreach is having to adjust and he is posting daily emails to his congregation online. I was very struck by the two poems he included in yesterday's email. I hope they speak to you of good things, and of hope.

**Nicky Bull, High Street Baptist**

### The Peace of Wild Things

When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's  
lives may be,

I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the  
great heron feeds.

I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of  
still water.

And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

**Wendell Berry, Openings, 1968**

### Lockdown

Yes, there is fear.

Yes, there is isolation.

Yes, there is panic buying.

Yes, there is sickness.

Yes, there is even death. But,

They say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise

You can hear the birds again.

They say that after just a few weeks of quiet

The sky is no longer thick with fumes

But blue and grey and clear.

They say that in the streets of Assisi

People are singing to each other across the empty squares,

keeping their windows open so that those who are alone

may hear the sounds of family around them.

They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland

Is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.

Today a young woman I know is busy spreading fliers with

her number through the neighbourhood

So that the elders may have someone to call on.

Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and Temples

are preparing to welcome

and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary.

All over the world people are slowing down and reflecting.

All over the world people are looking at their neighbours in a new way.

All over the world people are waking up to a new reality

To how big we really are.

To how little control we really have.

To what really matters.

To Love.

So we pray and we remember that

Yes there is fear.

But there does not have to be hate.

Yes there is isolation.

But there does not have to be loneliness.

Yes there is panic buying.

But there does not have to be meanness.

Yes there is sickness.

But there does not have to be disease of the soul

Yes there is even death.

But there can always be a rebirth of love.

Wake to the choices you make as to how to live now.

Today, breathe.

Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic

The birds are singing again,

The sky is clearing,

Spring is coming,

And we are always encompassed by Love.

Open the windows of your soul

And though you may not be able

to touch across the empty square,

Sing.

**Fr Richard Hendrick, Ireland**

## When school is cancelled

On 18 March I was discussing my History homework with friends, trying to discern which of the readings would help us find the information we wanted. We then tuned into the nightly broadcast to discover that our A levels, and school itself, had been cancelled. While we knew this was on the cards, it was not something any of us had truly expected, a sentiment many will have felt with the various announcements throughout the past weeks.

For the past two years we have been working towards our exams; the realisation that we suddenly no longer had them came with a flurry of emotions. There was initial relief that I could sack off tomorrow's homework that was only half finished, then confusion: how will we get our grades? Will they be done at a later date? What about university? As the days went on and the government gave more clarity, there was a new emotion: disappointment. We have been working for two years for something that won't happen. There is a feeling of dissatisfaction that these courses are left unfinished. In the immediate aftermath I have never been so ready to write an essay! It felt incredibly confusing. Most of us had had a tunnel vision mindset on what was to come and all of a sudden that changed. Suddenly we had been given an awful lot of free time with very little to do in that time. One of my friends messaged me that evening to say she had impulsively signed up to four online courses to fill her time!

I could spend hours discussing the system of predicted grades and the various injustices. There are many students whose predicted grades are nothing like what they could have produced in an exam with a few months more work; these are the students who will be most disadvantaged by the system. While it was a necessary move for public health, one cannot help but feel that those students have lost out. As usual, a one-size-fits-all education system does not fit close to all.

There is also disappointment for many students about what was to come. These are, of course, selfish thoughts in a pandemic, but I am sure many of us have felt these thoughts for our various cancelled plans. Our plans for post-exam celebrations, holidays and various 18<sup>th</sup>

birthdays have swiftly disappeared. Of course, there are bigger concerns but, for many of us, we have been working towards these exams, not only for the grades, but for the knowledge of the reward that comes afterwards.

For many of us there is a sadness that we were unable to say goodbye. In many lessons in the last week there was a sense that schools would close and we said strange goodbyes to classmates and teachers alike. On the last day our 6<sup>th</sup> form team, who, as with all teachers,



deserve incredible thanks for the work they have done to support students at this time, gave us an assembly detailing what they knew and how they would help us. My friends and I, knowing that we would not see each other for some months, then went to town and bought ourselves a picnic to have together. It was an incredibly bittersweet ending to two years of work. Those of us who had moved to a new school to study for A levels are grateful that while we did not get what we had moved for, we have left with new friendships and experiences.

In a way, we are incredibly fortunate to have a pandemic in this age: thanks to technology, my friends are available in a number of ways. The other night my friends and I had a virtual quiz. The virtual world will never be the same as the physical world but I think it has taught many of us to appreciate the small things. The moments we spent together

at school suddenly feel so much more valuable than we realised.

Perhaps this article sounds selfish in the midst of a global disaster? Where many are in far worse positions, a bunch of students are complaining that they don't know what to do with their time. But maybe, hopefully, this strikes a chord with how many people feel. Life felt very certain to most of us; it is very clear now that nothing is certain.

I am sure that years from when this has ended, I will not feel the same sense of loss about my exams, but will remember the strangeness of this time. Hopefully we will also be able to look back at this time about how people came together. For example, my form tutor sent out an email to check in and there was a sense of normalcy when we shared our week with one another, as if we were sitting down in form on a Monday morning. Hopefully I will recall the various calls I have had with friends, or the crafts that I have been attempting to fill my time with. The loss of the exams and the immediate future which we had so certainly expected, will hopefully be filled with newfound gratitude for our 'normal lives' when they return.

For now, I, like many of my friends, am looking forward to our post-school plans, with the hope that they will still go ahead. I am hoping to go to Sheffield to study History; but beyond that, my plans are quite open. Perhaps this shows that planning a set-in-stone future isn't always the best idea!

**Eliza Bellis, St Peter & St Paul**



Please submit your article to the Editor by the 1st of the month. Aim for 400 or 800 words and please send a head and shoulders colour photo or jpg and any other photos in high resolution. Contact [comment.magazine@gmail.com](mailto:comment.magazine@gmail.com)

## On a positive note...



During this difficult time, it's easy to be concerned and depressed about the future. The pandemic seems to spread deeper and wider every day. However, we

will get through this, defeat the virus and life will continue.

I've always been a 'glass half full' kind of person – an eternal optimist, confident that things will turn out well. Whilst it is difficult to find many positives in the tragic stories emerging every day, if you look carefully, beneath the headlines, there are some positive signs that human behaviour is changing and the world may just be a better place when Covid-19 is banished to the history books.

I wanted to share with you the top 10 things that have caught my attention:

### Kindness

'How are you? How can I help?' When was the last time so many conversations started like this? But these days, this is how almost every conversation starts. People have become more caring, showing friendship and compassion like never before.

### Family and friends

Although we can't cross household boundaries, many families have become emotionally closer, speaking more regularly with extended family members than we ever did previously.

### Collaboration

Organisations are communicating with each other more effectively, working together in partnership and prioritising key actions. There's greater flexibility, understanding, patience and resilience by all parties. Post Covid-19, it is likely that business and client relationships will be even stronger, based on a deeper understanding of the symbiotic relationship between organisations.

### Volunteering

Giving back has always been important and provides a sense of purpose and wellbeing. But never more so than now. It is encouraging to see so many people giving up their time to help others, especially the vulnerable. Over 500,000 people in the UK registered to become NHS volunteers within a few hours. I am

still waiting for my application to be processed, given the high volume of applications and my addiction to creating Top 10 lists for everything!

### Exercise

When something is rationed or restricted, it suddenly becomes much more desirable and precious. At the time of writing, we are allowed out of the house for one form of exercise a day – a walk, run or cycle. I'm determined not to miss this opportunity. This entitlement could be revoked by the government at any time. As a result, I am probably running more than I did before lockdown – a 10k run with the kids every other day, and a family walk on rest days. I've heard that families that never used to exercise have started running. It's just possible that the country could be fitter after lockdown than it was before. Although, judging by the empty beer and wine aisles in the supermarket, I'm not sure it will be healthier!

### Time

There seems to be a bit (lot) more time for everything. Less rushing around – no commute, school run, taxi service, sports practice, sports fixtures, etc. More time to appreciate the simple things in life – the sun shining, the flowers growing and the birds singing. Time to learn and develop new skills – baking, drawing, etc.

### Creativity

'Necessity is the mother of invention.' People are finding new ways of doing things every day. Parents are using their imagination to keep the children entertained. Musicians are entertaining us online. Gym instructors are keeping us fit online. TV presenters are creating science lessons. Creativity is thriving.

### Climate change

In a matter of weeks, the crisis has had a positive impact that Greta Thunberg imagined would take years to achieve. With the reduction in travel and carbon emissions, our cities are less polluted and the air is cleaner. But most importantly, it demonstrates that attitudes, behaviour and mindset can change, when faced with a global crisis.



### Opportunity

'When the heart weeps for what it has lost, the spirit rejoices for what it has found.' After this unprecedented crisis, there will be unprecedented opportunity. Some aspects of life will return to normal, but other things will be changed and may be forever better.

And finally, we're all in this together. 'Comparison is the thief of joy.' Normally, on a daily basis, I am subjected to a barrage of Facebook posts and Instagram photos from you all, enjoying your exotic holidays, world cruises, lavish parties and great sporting events. But there's a hiatus in this boasting and bragging. Everyone is staying home. And there's always someone worse off than you.

As I write this, ITV is showing the 2011 film Contagion, about a deadly virus that originates from a bat in China and spreads across the world! It's a good film but the timing feels unnecessary and irresponsible. I wouldn't want to be Head of ITV Scheduling explaining that one to my bosses tomorrow!

This is an unprecedented situation. But beneath the pandemic, there are some positive signs that human behaviour is changing, and the future may be better than the past.

Stay positive. Stay well. Stay home.

**Julian Crane**  
**Ridgeway Learning Trust**

# Wartime Memories

## Commemorating VE Day 1945

### Bombs, shelters and Dad's army

I was only 3 years old when the war started, and I was 8 years old when it finished, so to me it was an accepted situation, with little in-depth worry.

I lived in a new house, semi-detached, in a cul de sac in Croxley Green. The best houses were 'down the bend'. One side of the road backed onto a Junior School playing field, and our side of the road backed onto another field, this time a field of allotments. On the other side of the field were public woodlands. It was a lovely place to be brought up in. We could easily play in the road; very few households had a car, and we could also play 'over the woods'.

The Infant School was only just across the junction of our road with the main road. The Junior School had a drive entrance in the middle of our road. There were air-raid shelters here, but I cannot remember any occasion when there was any air-raid during a time we were at school. We did explore them though, taking a torch, to find our way from one end to the other.

The Church was a short distance along the main road, as were the shops and the bus stops. What was the effect of the war on me then, in my early life? Very little. My father was in Dad's Army and had a secure job with 'Dickenson's Paper Mill'. It was astonishing, looking back on it, that only a very few fathers

were in the Armed Forces.

The air-raid siren was very local. My father and grandfather built a concrete underground shelter at the back of our house. This was almost unique in our road. Sometimes we slept 'under the stairs', and then later down the shelter itself. It is amazing that I never saw another one like it until I lived in Mortimer Hill, Tring. There was one over the fence at the back of our garden.



At intervals in the road were placed large bins for discarded food. These were called 'pig bins'. The one in the bend was a useful cricket wicket. I remember standing outside the grocers, wondering what it would look like if

the Congregational Church was not there. Incredibly, a bomb flattened it a short time later. Also, our Church was severely damaged, and the organ had to be replaced at the west end. Another bomb, a 'land mine' fell in the woods and some of our windows were broken by the blast.

It was in the middle of the war when I first went to Infant School. Most of the pupils went to lunch at the nearby Methodist Church. I went home as this was so close. I came back one summer afternoon and sat on a bench in the sun and went to sleep. No one noticed I was missing until 3 o'clock!

One day our art class was set to paint what we might see at night-time. One boy next to me had covered his paper in black. 'What's that?' said the teacher. The answer from Ian Brodie was 'Darkness'.

In my last year, when I was 8 years old, I wrote a letter to the teacher saying, 'Can you let David go at 3.20 as he has an appointment with the dentist?'. This was signed with my mother's name. To my surprise, the teacher complied, and I rushed for the bus, to then catch a train to Amersham and then to Marylebone. There was no dentist appointment, of course. I just loved travelling on trains!

**David Gittins**  
**St Peter & St Paul**



## Some of my wartime memories

I had recently turned 5 years old when war broke out. I was very fortunate as the war did not affect me as much as it did some others in that I was not evacuated from Marlow-on-Thames and nor was my father called up to go away and fight. He was a butcher helping to feed the nation and he was also nearly 39 years old – too old! He did, however, join the police force as a Special Constable and made new and lasting friendships when he was on duty.

I can well remember being given a gasmask and being shown how to put it on, and the funny noise it made when I breathed; and then having to take it with me to school in a brown cardboard box with strong string to hang over my shoulder. At school air-raid shelters were constructed in the playground and we had air-raid practices when we had to line up and troop out to get to safety.

Once, when I was in my bedroom, I looked out of the window and saw a crowd of children and adults all milling about and I stood for ages watching as they gradually dispersed with children going off with an adult and carrying a little case – they were, of course, evacuees and in time I got to know some of them at school. One of the games we played was imagining our neighbour was housing a spy and we would try to peep over a 6ft wall to look into her back yard.

Although as a family we were not allocated an evacuee, we did take in a family (Mr & Mrs Wakley and Kathleen their daughter who is six months older than me). We gave up our sitting room for them to use as their family bedroom and our mothers shared the cooking, etc. Our garden was transformed as my father took to having chickens and rabbits and we had rabbits'-fur mittens made by Mum, with skins cured by my father. Dad also dug a big hole and constructed an air-raid shelter (although we never used it as it was deemed safer for us to go down into our cellar than to troop up the garden). Our neighbours joined us when there was an air-raid and Mr 'Okey doke', as my father called him, would entertain us children by throwing shadows from the candlelight onto the wall, looking like animals made by the way he placed his hands.

Dad also took on an allotment as did

most families. We never had any new toys as they were not being made so everything was second-hand, the paper in books was grey coloured as it was recycled. Many of my dresses had been passed on to me. A couple my parents knew were cook and chauffeur to a surgeon who had two daughters and I had their outgrown pretty dresses which I loved. My father got a shoe last and mended all our shoes; we cut the end of the top of our sandals off when our feet grew too long for the sandal so as to make them last longer; and my brother had studs in the soles of his boots which meant he could make sparks fly when he scraped them on the paving; collars were turned and old clothes remade into a new dress or coat. It was our mothers, of course, who had to deal with rationing – we had a lot of suet puddings to fill us up. Every little bit of meat was used and we had tripe and onion (the stomach of a cow in a white onion sauce, it was very chewy), the trotters and head of a pig boiled up and every scrap of meat taken off to make brawn. We also ate heart and brains and sweetbread.

I very rarely saw my grandparents as, of course, there was petrol rationing and they lived fifty or so miles away. In those days we were allowed to walk the streets alone and walked to school even when in the Infants. I recall one day walking to the recreation ground and found it had no gates or railings – all taken away to make munitions – and also no park keeper.

A lot of my school friends were being brought up just by their mother and I remember one day when two sisters told my mother that their father was missing – and my mother's reaction. Every day we children had to be quiet when the news was broadcast on the wireless and every Saturday, as a family, we walked down to the cinema, not only to see a film but also so my parents could see the Pathé News showing the latest war action.

We got used to the siren going off and seeing the night sky lit up with beams looking for enemy aircraft. Only once was the town bombed when a Nazi plane was being chased and it dropped its bombs along the river to lighten its load – one man was killed

when he stood outside his door to watch.

Besides coats and dresses being transformed into other garments, so were jumpers. They would be unravelled and the wool washed (all wool then, no synthetics) then dried and it would be all crinkly. It was then wound into balls and reknitted, with cardigans fastened using buttons cut off old garments.

One was not allowed to be a fussy eater – we either ate what was put before us or went hungry; my dad would always say 'A child in Africa would be pleased to have that'. Reconstituted egg was used to make cakes. As children we were fortified with concentrated orange juice and cod liver oil (given on a spoon) and I also remember having radio malt, which is a bit like treacle. We had to be registered at a particular grocer's shop, etc. so there was no going around seeing if another shop had anything different. I can well recall the rumour going around that Dorset's (our grocer) had received a delivery of something exotic, like oranges or bananas (I can't remember exactly what it was) and my mother telling me to quickly get my coat on and we rushed along to the shop and queued to buy some. My mother loved oranges but my father hated the smell, so we always had to go into another room to eat one.

Blackout was another feature of those days, of course, and no chink of light was allowed and many windows were strengthened against blast by tape being stuck across them, although we did not do that in our house. Much later I learned that one day when my mother was stretching to hang up the blackout curtains she felt something snap in her tummy and it triggered a miscarriage. I didn't know why my mother was in bed and a nurse was in the house, but I do well remember the nurse coming downstairs with a bowl in her hands while I was trying to walk upstairs. She told me to stay still and I didn't, so when I tried to get past her, she was very cross. My mother never did have another baby after my brother.

**Sheila Davis**  
**St Martha's Methodist Church**

## WRENS

During the war, I was in Oxford with the WRNS (The Women's Royal Navy Service). I joined in 1943 because I liked the uniform, a double-breasted jacket and skirt, with shirt and tie! It attracted posh girls with names like Philippa and Henrietta. But I didn't like it at first because we had to get up at 5.30am to scrub floors... I nearly decided to come home but in the end my pride stopped me.



I was a humble WREN, the only WREN, working in the Inter-services Topographical Department, a joint British Army and Navy organisation responsible for supplying topographic intelligence for all combined operations and in particular, for preparing reports in advance of military operations.



After having cycled from Tring to Oxford, I had to make the tea and wash up. After the invasion I did a lot of messing about that you couldn't really call work, including knitting.

On 8 May 1945 I remember going into Oxford where it was quite fun. I remember Churchill saying something like 'We can have a lot of time rejoicing but we've a lot of hard work yet to do'. My boss, Major Andrews, said 'You have magic in your fingers', and after the war he got me a job on the Economist, drafting charts and maps as the war continued on the Malay peninsula.

**Grace Hodge, St Peter & St Paul**

## Our evacuees

What do I remember of our evacuees? Well, let me think for a moment – it was a long time ago!

During the war years my parents, Douglas and Winifred Sanders, were living in a bungalow in Dundale Road, virtually opposite the entrance to Manor Road. It was one of two identical bungalows which my dad and his brother Harold had had built in the 1930s and the back gardens, which were not very deep, had been joined together to form a tennis court. Many happy hours had been spent there by my Mum and Dad and friends. But I digress...

My father's friend, Arthur Mansfield, was a Billeting Officer, finding suitable homes for children who had been sent out of London when the bombing was at its height. We were asked if we would take a child; and I think my Mum said we would but preferably a girl about my age – I was 13 at the time – and so Jinny Barber came to live with us.

As I was at school in Berkhamsted, I am not sure where the evacuees went to school – probably integrated with the Tring schools as there would have been a wide age range. I can remember that our neighbours also had a girl evacuee, and a Mrs Gregory in Manor Road billeted a very pretty girl called Ora. A gang of us all went tobogganing together in Tring Park during a very cold and snowy winter. Jinny's mum came to see her occasionally so she didn't feel too isolated from her family, and I vividly remember her mother knitting us pixie hats with enormous points – we loved them!

When the worst of the bombing was over, Jinny went back to London; she visited us once after the war but that was the end of our acquaintance.

At the same time we had two other evacuees, a Mr and Mrs Sam Causer. How they came to be with us I have no idea! There were now six of us living in our bungalow. I had given up my bedroom to Mr and Mrs Causer, Jinny had a small room that had been a general purpose room with a small divan in it, and I had a single bed in

my parents' bedroom, which was large enough to accommodate a double bed, a single bed, a wardrobe and a dressing table.

My Mum was an excellent cook and with Mrs Causer's help served up many tasty and substantial meals; the six of us all ate together around a large table in the kitchen. We had a small allotment where Dad grew a good variety of vegetables, and we kept chickens, so we had a good supply of eggs. We didn't have homogenised milk in those days, so Mum would skim off the cream (which rose to the top of the bottle) and shake it until it became butter, which helped out our small fat ration. There was no obesity then – we were all pretty healthy.

We didn't have an air raid shelter so when the siren went, we all used to gather in the hall, which for some reason was considered the safest place. Mr and Mrs Causer were probably in their 60s, and he was the managing Director of The National Time Recorder Co. in Blackfriars. They lived – or should say had been living – in a very large house in Lewisham and Mr Causer would travel up to his company's premises every day. They had a son who was an officer in the Army and he would visit occasionally. He was very good looking and we girls all had a crush on him, but he had a fiancée who, needless to say, we didn't approve of! Their daughter Vera and son-in-law Bert Timberkake, with young son Anthony, were also billeted in Tring, with our friends Mr and Mrs Randall and daughter Jill who lived in Manor Road. Both these families returned to their Lewisham homes when the worst of the blitz was over. We visited the Causers once or twice but didn't keep in touch for long, so that was the end of our relationship with our evacuees.

We, like many other families, accepted complete strangers into our homes and were glad to do so. I just pray to God the need never happens again.

**Pam Cockerill**  
**St Cross Wilstone**

## Lost in London!

Mother took me to The Mall near Buckingham Palace on VE Day 1945 and in the excitement, we got separated. Father, because of his age, was a late recruit to the Army in 1943, and spent three years away until late 1946. He missed the VE party.

I was born in Hampstead, London, in 1934, an only child, and had spent the early years of the war as an evacuee with my father's family in Devon.

Following the bombing campaign of our cathedral cities in 1942, and in particular Exeter where I was at the time, Father brought me back to London. The house where I was then living had received a direct hit, but amazingly no one was at home. Dad's argument was that if I were to be killed, it might as well be with my family in London.



In fact, I had two further narrow escapes. A V1 landed in 1944 about thirty yards from our London home. Again, nobody was at home at the time but it took several months to repair the damage to the house. Later a V2 landed about a quarter of a mile from a cinema where I was watching a war film! Again, I escaped unhurt.

Returning to VE Day, I cannot remember how I got there, but I eventually found my way to the Strand Underground station. A friendly policeman gave me the tube fare to Archway on the Northern Line. Once there I walked up Highgate Hill to home in Highgate Village. When mother returned, she was not a happy bunny and it was straight to bed with a smacked bottom and no supper!

**Bill Bradford, St Peter & St Paul**

## Outside Buckingham Palace

It was one of my mother's few boasts that she was outside Buckingham Palace on VE Day. She was 12 when the war started and 18 by the time it finished, a significant time in a young woman's life. She lived in St Mary Cray near Orpington, part then of Kent but now in the London Borough of Bromley. It was in a direct line from the V1 and V2 rocket launching sites in Northern France and Central London so it received quite a pounding from missiles with insufficient fuel to reach the City. One landed at the end of the street and her school was also bombed. Like many children of my age, I enjoyed playing on a bombsite even fifteen years after the end of the war.

I had always assumed that my mother went with her mother, father and two younger sisters, but this was not the case according to my aunt whom I rang to check on the details. Actually, my mother was with her father and

her friend Iris. My grandfather was on home leave from Scapa Flo in the Orkneys where he was a clerk with the Royal Engineers working for 1029 Dock Operating Company in Stromness. (The Comment Orkney correspondents Mac and Carrie live 100 yards from the shore of Scapa Flo and attend St Mary's Church in Stromness.) My aunt missed out because she was at home revising hard for her School Certificate examinations. Her mother stayed at home with her and her little sister.

My aunt could not fill me in on any details of the VE celebrations but she could tell me about what happened on VJ Day. She had been shipped down to her aunt who lived in Hastings for a bit of a cheap holiday after she had worked so hard for her examinations. When VJ Day came the road was shut off, tables put down the middle of the street and a traditional party was held with food scraped together from here, there and

everywhere. She remembers it as a day of fun for the children and relief for the adults.

I recounted this story to my brother and he told me a story which I had never heard or else had forgotten. My father, when he was called up near the start of the war, was a teetotal Nonconformist. By the end he was not. He was still in Germany on VE Day but was home on leave for VJ Day and, shall we say, he entered fully into the spirit of the celebrations in Trafalgar Square. Late in the evening, he and a friend, both dressed in Army uniform, thought it would be a good idea to go and tell them in the nearby Admiralty House what they thought of the Royal Navy's contribution to the war.

He woke up the following morning in a police cell and was released without charge but with a large headache.

**Jon Reynolds,  
Tring Team**

## Dad's war – 'off to school in a kilt'



My dad, Peter Fowler, was 10 when war broke out.

During his childhood in Sunbury-on-Thames, his home had no electricity so there was no fridge, electric light, oven or radio. Cooking was done on a hob over a fire. A wireless was powered by an accumulator which was recharged every few days. The washing was boiled in a copper (my dad was one of twelve children – imagine all those nappies!) and scrubbed with sunlight soap on a washing board.

Milk was delivered daily by horse and cart and poured from churns into

customers' jugs, the minimum sale being a gill (4 pints). Bread and muffins were delivered from a three-wheeled bicycle with a basket at the front for those who did not bake their own. Everyone grew their own soft fruit and vegetables and my grandfather (who was in the Auxiliary Fire Service) would snare rabbits to make rabbit stew.

Everyone shared. When you ran out, you would go next door for a cup of sugar or a bit of margarine. When someone baked, they would take a cake to a neighbour (*a little different from the 2020 lockdown when neighbours in my road asked for someone to leave ground cumin on their step! Ed*).

On the day war was declared, a siren sounded and everyone wore the gas masks they had been given. Ration books were issued. The family had a Morrison Shelter in their Living Room towards the end of the war. It was made of 8-gauge metal, and six people could sleep under it. It had square mesh around it to keep the bits of flying debris off if your home was

bombed, and the top took the weight of the house descending on you. This was better than the Anderson Shelter which preceded it, a corrugated iron affair in the back garden over a hole in the ground. In winter these would fill with water and could not be used.

My dad's family were bombed on 28 November 1940 at around 10.15 at night. The area was a target because the Anglo Iranian (now BP), the oil refinery, was nearby. The bomb hit the back of the house, taking out four houses and burying the family of seven for two hours until they were dug out. The dolls' prams belonging to his younger sisters were found half a mile away. The family was pulled from the wreckage and taken to a friend's home that night. Dad had to wear a kilt to school next day because no trousers could be found for him.

To me that is unimaginable: a bomb hits your house and YOU SEND YOUR CHILDREN TO SCHOOL NEXT DAY!

**Annette Reynolds  
St Peter & St Paul**

## Mum's war – 'Refusal offal offends'

When World War II broke out in 1939, my mother, Marion Legg, was 4 years old and lived in Sunbury-on-Thames.

She remembered the food rations (which changed at different times as the war went on) as 2oz butter per person per week; 4oz sugar; 1 shilling's worth of meat which might buy some fatty mince or a pound and a half of lamb's liver if you were in favour with the butcher. A bone for stewing was a treat if you could get it. A notice was displayed saying: 'Please do not ask for offal for refusal offal offends'. You could get four cough drops without sweet coupons and buy a pickle for a farthing. Her father grew vegetables and they kept Road Island Red chickens. When

she was 7 or 8 her job was to mix the evil-smelling Karswood in a saucepan to feed the laying hens.

For about a month during the War, my grandmother took her four children home to live in Wales, which was safer than Sunbury. They travelled by train to London and from there to Cardiff. Then they caught a bus to the village where my great grandmother lived in Argoed. The family was farmed out amongst the relatives who all lived in the same street.

They had no running hot water at that time.

She remembers being bathed in the same 'copper' that the washing was done in. No one she knew had new clothes: everyone bought clothes from jumble sales.

**Annette Reynolds  
St Peter & St Paul**



## My war

I was 9 years old and my brother, David, was 12 when the Second World War started.

There had only been twenty-one years since the end of the First World War in which my dad had been involved for three years on the Western Front where he experienced indescribable horrors. So, as Hitler started his evil campaign to dominate Europe, he must have had grave concerns for his sons reaching an age when they would have to enlist. As boys, we did not appreciate the possible consequences for our generation and got on with life even with all the enormous changes which awaited us.

We lived in North Islington and were supplied with gas masks at the Archway Central Hall in the summer of 1939. We had to practise using them in school and when they made 'rude' noises everyone roared with laughter (as far as you could with the mask on!).

My mother came from the Isle of Wight and, most years, we would go for a holiday partly to see her family, our aunts, uncles and cousins. We were there in the August, and as war was expected, stayed there in Wroxall, near Shanklin, thus escaping the organised scheme for evacuating. We were leaving the morning service at the village Methodist Church when the announcement came. It caused shock and consternation among the



villagers and my parents, but, as boys, we did not really understand what might happen or that our lives would be drastically changed.

It seemed, for a while, like a prolonged holiday, but that didn't last long as our normal London routine was totally different from village life. I went to the village school and David took a train to Ventnor Secondary School (later, he was transferred to Sandown Grammar School). We were reminded that there was a war on when we went to the beach at Sandown to find all the hotels boarded up and barbed wire all over the place. Later, we found out that the pipeline under the ocean taking oil to the D Day landings (PLUTO) started from that beach.

After a year in Wroxall, we moved to a little wooden bungalow opposite a farmhouse where a great friend of my mother's lived and owned a farm. More innovation, as I was able to keep rabbits in this large garden while David kept chickens. The large house in which the garden stood only had one occupant so it was taken over to house troops on their way to the front. They would offer Mum some of the extra food which was helpful. One day they brought her about 10lbs of figs!

Taking an interest in the farm, I would get up at 5.30am to help milk the cows, having to get them in from the field in the dark and across a railway line! Certainly, as London boys, we enjoyed the new experiences. I can always remember the milking as, sometimes, the cow would swish its mucky tail round my face, or it would put its foot into my bucket or do something even worse. However, it made an interesting start to the day before I went off to school, a mile away in Brading. We tried to help the war effort by collecting paper for recycling and working on a school allotment. The only thing I can remember about that was eating the rhubarb at the site! During my time at Brading School I took the 11+ exam using papers from London, so that, on return, I could go to the same Grammar School as



David – if I passed – which I did, to the amazement of the Headteacher as it was so unusual.

During all this time my dad had returned to London to work in the City at the King Edward Post Office where he was a sorter. On his early duty he would have to get there through all the rubble and destruction of the Blitz, but he was never late.

We were so close to Portsmouth that we often saw the terrible bombing of that city and the docks. An anti-aircraft gun near us made a great noise as we went into a room at the farmhouse which was heavily boarded up. Some planes were shot down over the island and was a cause of some excitement for me and my friends as we went up to the downs to view the remains the next day.

From our bungalow we went to an independent Chapel in Sandown where we enjoyed the services and made good friends. I remember the Pastor would give a children's talk and get us to learn a Bible verse by heart to be recited the following week. One verse I can still recall was from Hebrews 4:12: 'For the Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two edged sword... it judges the thoughts and intents of the heart.'

In 1941 my mother and brother returned to London so he could start work at the age of 14. The Blitz was over, but there was more to come. So I

went back to Wroxall to live with my older cousin and her husband who had a bakery and a small grocer shop. There I was able to help thumping the dough ready for the oven. I went by train to Sandown Grammar School for a year before returning to London in 1942.



Back home there were still some raids before the V1s and V2s made life difficult, especially with blackout and rationing. We went into an Anderson shelter sunk into our small garden, but returned to our beds as soon as the raid was over. As most people know, the Doodlebug V1 was dangerous once the engine stopped and we would wait, with bated breath, until it exploded. There was no warning of a rocket V2 and, on one Sunday afternoon as we were having tea, there was the most enormous explosion – a rocket had landed just round the corner and, as we found out later, had demolished whole roads. We were not in a direct line with the blast, but suffered some damage. We were all very shocked. Another V2 landed right near my friend's house near

Holloway and another at Nag's Head, where, as a result, we were asked to look after a little boy, Ernest, who had lost his family and home. A block of flats next to my school at Highbury was destroyed making our school unusable, so we had our preparation year for the matric (as it was called then) in a disused school at Canonbury.

At Hornsey Rise Baptist Church, where we had always attended, I helped to run a boys' club at the age of 13 as all the men were in the services (my introduction to youth work which I have enjoyed ever since). But, despite all these interruptions to normal life I enjoyed playing lots of football and cricket and started to go to Shepherd's Bush to see Queen's Park Rangers from 1942, a team I have supported ever

since. I also went to Lord's to watch cricket although normal County games had been suspended, but some great cricketers often played and I started collecting autographs.

My brother just missed being called up for active service and I was too young to be involved. When the war ended, we did not join in the celebrations in London, but, as most people know, it took some time to return to normal life; rationing seemed to be worse for a time. But I do remember the first banana I ate, with that wonderful taste and smell, a few years later.

**John Young**  
**Akeman Street Baptist**



V2 Rocket - St Johns Road, Islington, Nov 1944

## Memories of VE Day



I was born on 25 August 1939, just about ten days before the Second World War was declared, in a nursing home about fifty yards up Harrow Hill: the famous Harrow School is at the top.

I guess times must have been very tense with people wondering what the outcome of politicians' discussions would be. Eventually, of course, Winston Churchill told everyone over the wireless (as it was then) that Britain was at war with Germany.

My earliest memories are of the war years. My father was a civil engineer and not conscripted into the army

because of problems with his hearing. During the war years he was away from home most of the time, involved in building work – roads and runways for transport in particular.

My mother and I were at home in Pinner. The lady who lived next door had no children and her husband was away from home in the RAF – so we saw a great deal of her. We lived quite close to Stanmore where there was an army/air force bomber command base. As a result we saw a great deal of aircraft activity against the Germans, particularly at night. It was scary and I can remember my mother, our neighbour and I all sleeping in one bed in our house when the fighting was really bad. When there were air raid alarms, we used to go and hide in the walk-in airing cupboard at the top of

the stairs!

I can remember walking to school each day with several small friends from the age of 5. It was about 2.5 miles up a long concrete road and for most of the way there were no houses, just fields. In the summer it was fun but it was bitterly cold in winter.

My recollection of VE Day is a celebration party on a village green in Hatch End Pinner with jellies and cakes and the usual games (blind man's bluff, musical bumps, rounders). There was also a fancy dress parade: I can remember my mother making me a white dress from an old bed sheet. I wore a garland in my hair with green leaves, and I had a red sash that had the word PEACE in silver on it.

**Barbara Thomas  
St Peter & St Paul**



During the last War, my mother, Nina Bly, coped with living next door to her mother-in-law, supplying her with one meal a day and helping to run our much-reduced antique shop on Tring High Street. At the same time, she had an evacuee family of husband and wife and little girl staying in our own tiny house in the courtyard next to St Peter & St Paul's Church.

It was quite a lot to put up with, especially having a man around who was not in the armed forces (he had a job in the arms factory in Watford) while my father was in Reykjavik. Then the little girl gave me measles, followed by whooping cough when I was three years old.

In 1945 I was 6 and on VE Day I remember standing outside our shop amazed at seeing hitherto rather dour

people running up and down, hugging one another, laughing and shaking hands.

At this time my grandmother's great ally was Mrs Wheeler, mother-in-law to the wonderful Aileen. The two families have been happily entwined ever since. Both Mrs Bly and Mrs Wheeler had a son on active service, and both old ladies had suffered tragedy during and after the First World War, so they were strict and reserved in their behaviour. They showed subdued joyful reaction to all the street celebrations starting to take place.

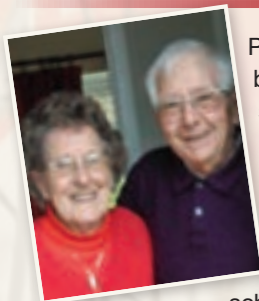
My mother's great friend was Mrs Brenda Kew, wife of Bill, whose company, J.Honour & Sons was to take over as leading builders in the area. Brenda had no such restrictions on her lifestyle and was a constant breath of fresh air to my mother. Out of sight of the two matriarchs, I saw Brenda push through the now crowded street, grab my mother by the hand and pull

her across to the Rose and Crown Hotel. My mother had never been in a public bar. And suddenly, there she was, all worries forgotten. But only for a moment, for it was not long before Lettie Bly noticed her absence and was soon told where she was.

Dear, faithful and sympathetic Jack Waring, of workshop and smoking fame, was summoned and ordered to go and retrieve Nina from that den of iniquity immediately, lest the demon drink and the fires of Hell should delay the old lady's next meal. And so, Jack did as he was told, and came back across the road with a none-too-happy Nina.

But my mother had at last seen the inside of a bar, and it was a long while before she saw another one. She took it all with good will and sat with Lettie and me in our shop just chatting and people-watching. It could so easily have ended in tears; but it didn't, thanks to my mother. It was a busy day.

**John Bly, St Peter & St Paul**



Pat Tapson was born in 1927 so she was 18 on VE Day and yet to meet her husband Ted.

She was 15 when she left school and started

work at the Park Royal. As Pat's parents were not together, she had spent her war in Wembley, living with a couple who had no children of their own. There was an air raid shelter in the street but Pat never used it.

Pat went into London with her friend Joan on 8 May 1945. They walked down the Mall and saw people who had spent

the night on the streets to be at the front of the crowds the following day. Pat celebrated with her friend by having a meal at the Dorchester Hotel.

Ted Tapson was a Petty Officer with the Royal Navy and spent his VE Day celebrating on board ship in the port of Trincomalee in Colombo, Ceylon.

**Pat & Ted Tapson, St Peter & St Paul**

## The new normal



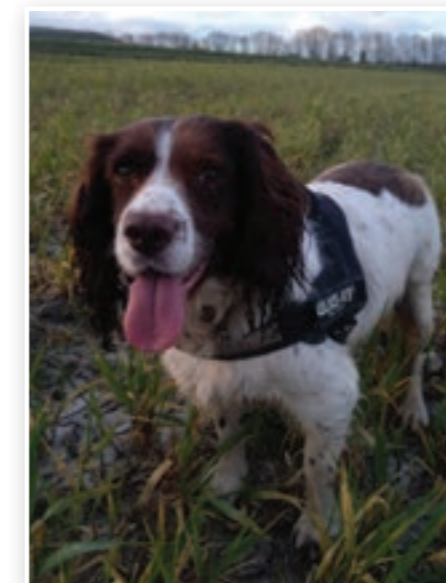
I recently saw a birthday card with the message 'April 2020 – probably the worst birthday ever' which I suppose one twelfth of the population must be feeling at the moment, as the impact of the coronavirus makes its presence felt in yet another way. (Although if your birthday was mid to late March, I suspect you would not have been able to have wild celebrations either.)

As I write this, it is the week before schools should be breaking up for the Easter holidays. I would normally be practising hymns for our school Easter service, my Music and Drama club would be performing Captain Noah and his Floating Zoo, and we were having a visit from an athlete and a whole school trip to Green Park Activity village.

Instead we at Aldbury School are in our second week of distance learning. This was all very exciting the first few days but the excitement has palled a little as we realise we must pace ourselves to get through what is surely going to be many weeks. Who knew a day could go so slowly? We have all got a separate area of the house to work in – cunningly, I have chosen the kitchen, with its easy access to fridge and kettle – the boys are in their rooms and Andrew has taken over the study. Our two sons have to follow their school timetable as their teachers are online at certain times, which means they are gainfully employed from 9.00am-3.20pm. It also means the house is very quiet all day. I do not normally work in a quiet environment. I am used to lots of young voices, children moving about getting glue, people asking for help, or asking for a drink, or telling each other a joke, or complaining that their partner has 'stolen' their ruler, or that someone is humming too loudly. I am getting a lot of admin-type work done, nevertheless.

However, our dog is delighted by

the immediate impact of the lockdown. Suddenly everybody is at home all day, and all evening. There are lots of possibilities for walks – in fact, every member of the family seems to take Lady out once a day, and opportunities to play fetch in the garden have greatly increased. It has coincided with better weather, longer days and the clocks going forward, and the rain cloud which has appeared to be over the Tring area since January has finally moved on, allowing the very muddy fields to dry off.



We only adopted Lady, a springer spaniel, in October, just as the darker nights began, and spending time in the garden stopped with the awful weather. She was very excited last weekend when we did some gardening, but is terrified of the lawn mower. Our garden overlooks the windmill field, and Lady enjoys barking at people who are partaking of their daily permitted exercise, in what she considers to be part of her garden. Being at home all day, I have realised that it is a surprisingly busy field.

In actual fact, there have been other positives to come from the lockdown. Some of the highlights include having a very short commute (to be fair, mine is normally only eight minutes, but Andrew's is over an hour each way); not having to find clean school clothes; being able to

get up slighter later and in daylight; no homework; being able to get the washing pegged out on a sunny day; having time to cook dinner; everyone has finished work by 5.30pm, and being able to wear slippers for work. The big change that we have noticed is that we are no longer rushing about everywhere. The week before social distancing became the practice, I caught the same part of a radio show every day at 7:15pm, and realised that I had been out in the car for a variety of different events that all began at 7:30. Not having to go out in the evening is a nice break from routine at the moment.

I heard of someone who claimed to have not showered since lockdown began, as she did not see the point if she met nobody. Similarly, some people have had pyjama days or worn the same clothes for several days running. My mum always had a horror of what she called 'letting herself go' and instilled in me the same principles. There might be a pandemic of truly awful proportions, but you can still brush your hair, put your lipstick on and a squirt of perfume before you take the dog for a walk or even put out the recycling bins. 'Making an effort' was important to her, and not just if she was going out. Getting up and dressed was very important, and breakfast was never eaten whilst still in a dressing gown. As a child, I remember she always did her hair and freshened her make-up before my dad came home, and even after he was retired, she continued to do this before getting supper ready. She maintained her positive attitude throughout her life, and was doing an online German course only days before she died, to keep her mind active. I feel certain she would have embraced lockdown by taking up a new hobby, or learning a new skill.

So, although I take advantage of being able to wear my slippers, unless Lady has run off with one, I have not 'let myself go' and standards are being maintained in the Kinsey household.

**Gill Kinsey  
St Peter & St Paul**

## Parish registers

**Funerals** We thank God for the lives of the departed and pray for comfort for those who mourn.

**Bill Carpenter 85  
Victor John Gill 91  
Neil Goodman 93**

**Frederick Morris 89  
Kenneth Pouncett 90  
Brian Robinson 83**

**Frederick Smith 98  
Maurice Stedman 95  
Daphne Edna Margaret Winfield 91**

# There IS a magic money tree



We are inundated with a daily – or even hourly – stream of news about the pandemic, and are rightly worried about our health and that of our families and neighbours, and indeed of people across the globe. We also worry about the impact on families' incomes, especially for those in less

secure occupations. But what we really shouldn't have to worry about is the notion that one day all of this will have to be paid for with higher taxes, more austerity, or whatever.

Contrary to the pithy phrase from Theresa May – 'there is no magic money tree' – the economy is not at all like our individual housekeeping. There are occasions, and this is certainly one, when unbalancing the government's books in order to sustain incomes, spending, and production in the economy is the

right thing to do, and furthermore pays for itself. The money being injected in the present circumstances is matched by extra output, and so does not lead to unsustainable debt, or to inflation. In that sense, there really is a magic money tree.

So do stay safe, and do worry about social distancing, but don't worry that there will be a big cost to repay at some stage in the future. (Ask me if you want more explanation: telephone 01442 826314.)

**John Whiteman, St Peter & St Paul**

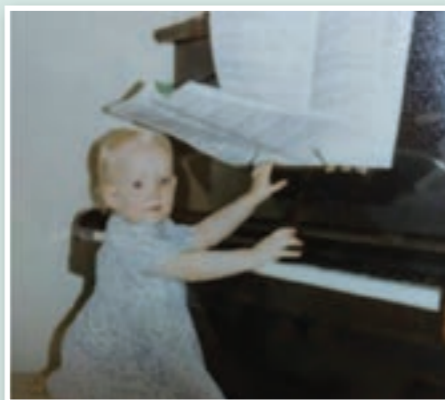
## We are all musicians

In our Western, individualistic culture, we have developed a philosophy of music which focuses on excellence, the technical proficiency of a few, specialist musicians, while the rest of us just listen and admire. For most of the world, though, making music is something for everyone: it is something we do every day, with colleagues, or friends from school, singing nursery rhymes in the playground, or hymns in Church. These occasions aren't mediocre versions of some ideal, but are the real thing. We don't even need to write it down, or notate it (in fact, musical literacy is a very modern invention); we don't even need to call it a 'piece' and give it a name – we just do it, rather like having a conversation.

The earliest documented musical instruments were found around a decade ago by archaeologists working in the caves of the Swabian Jura in southern Germany. Bone and ivory flutes (looking a little like some rather worse-for-wear recorders) show the presence of an already well-established musical tradition in Europe 35,000 years ago (this was the time of the very first modern Europeans). If there were already instruments by this stage, then it is not much of a jump to assume that singing and clapping together (of which there would be no material remaining) is something we might have done since the genesis of our species (and maybe before).

We know that music is built in to our biology from experience much closer to home. When we talk to infants (and dogs), we switch automatically to a sing-song, cooing sort of speech, making our words and phrases much more melodic, perhaps rocking them

in time with our words – because, somehow, we know that this makes it easier for them to understand and interact with us. In fact, children are much more musical than we give them credit for – they can detect changes to complex rhythms much more accurately than the average adult (who has, at least in the English-speaking world, become accustomed to simple metres); learning to speak a language fairly proficiently by the time they are a toddler by just listening to the patterns of sound produced by those around them is definitely a remarkable achievement.



*Engaging with music at an early age.*

When people say 'I'm not very musical', or even 'I'm actually tone-deaf', I don't readily believe them – music is so built into our formation, both as a species and as an individual, that it doesn't make sense to grade our musicality by how well we did in our piano lessons.

But our musicality is not just a skill we each hold for our own amusement. Rather, it is central to the communities that we are a part of. When we move (or just clap) in time with another person, we remember more about them, we say that we like them more, and we are more inclined to go to their aid if

they need us. Children in schools in Seattle, who took part in a programme of musical games, showed a great deal more empathy than other children who did the non-musical versions. The BaYaka community in the Central African Republic regularly sing together – in a style where everyone has their own distinct line, not taking over the texture, but also not disappearing out of view. Everyone sings like this: it is crucial practice for the same teamwork which they need in hunting for food, and protecting themselves from any lurking predators. Thus, music is not just an interesting hobby; it is actually a key part of our whole social world.

But, in establishing our musical and social lives, we also often put up boundaries. We have all felt a little left out when we are the only one who doesn't know the hymn tune – we go up rather than down, and end up just mumbling the words to ourselves. This same phenomenon can also be used more explicitly as a tool for division: football supporters know their own team's chant and sing it as loudly as possible; it would be out of the question to sing a rival chant, even if to add some diversity to their repertoire.

When we all come out of house arrest, we should make the most of being a community together, and remember to sing. It is part of being human, and is instrumental to our social lives together. We should be mindful and inclusive – music is not a universal good, or even a universal language. But it is a way of connecting with others, and is a performance in which we can all play a valuable part.

**Rebecca Whiteman  
St Edward, King & Martyr, Cambridge**

# Postcard from Sydney

We thought in the midst of all the chaos and social distancing measures going on around us, it would be nice to reconnect to our old friends in Tring and let you know something of what we have been up to over the last few months.

When we left Tring in early February to start our new life in Australia, we didn't imagine that less than two months later we would be writing this in the midst of a global pandemic.

But let's take things from the beginning. All started well for us: after a wonderful last night at Pendley Manor we had a somewhat turbulent flight due to the weather out of London, but arrived safe and sound in a baking-hot Sydney. A lovely little traditional terrace right in the heart of the city, ten minutes' walk from work, was our home for the first month. The heat was quite a shock, albeit a pleasant one, with temperatures consistently in the low 30s for the first week or so. Having been fortunate enough to miss the bushfires and the torrential rain, we were looking forward to starting our new life. Not much time to rest and enjoy the beaches though, as we only had six days before our jobs started to sort out the basics and begin the hunt for more permanent housing. As several rental agents unhelpfully pointed out, our timing was unfortunate as they had a glut of properties available before Christmas, but now most had gone and the market had taken a rather competitive turn.

After some hair-raising viewings of properties (we saw some real shockers: what are people thinking!) we were lucky enough to secure a lovely and spacious house on the edge of the Blue Mountains, with grand views from an upper and lower balcony and a secluded back garden – just in time for social isolation to commence!



It is easy to underestimate how much effort it takes to start a new life from scratch. Everything is new: banking, taxes, medical care, buying and

registering a car, insurances etc., and all turned out to be more complicated than we had anticipated. But we're getting there. Our cat Bluebell has also become a seasoned little traveller and arrived safe and happy after ten days in quarantine. She is now settling in very well and has quickly put back on the weight she lost in transit. Our shipping container has also made it to Sydney, two months after it left Tring, but given customs and quarantine checks, it might be a few more weeks before we have our household back.



We are currently mostly working from home as the university has moved online in the wake of the pandemic and our 'desks' are a pile of skilfully arranged cardboard boxes. But we feel very blessed with the home we've got. Just this morning, as Sylvie was sitting down to write, a couple of king parrots perched on a branch outside her study. Only very rarely did this happen in Tring... We also suspect that we have a nocturnal possum who has been sizing up our roof.

Workwise, needless to say, various events – public lectures, workshops etc. – that John had been organising in his research institute have had to be postponed, and those planned for the winter (ie July!) may well follow. But other projects can be done from home; team meetings and discussions continue to take place by Zoom; and Sylvie has much experience in running online teaching programmes, so we are adapting well. At the time of writing (late March), Sydney is not yet in lockdown mode, though restrictions are increasing daily, and



both international and state borders are effectively closed. Our former employer had two campuses, divided by the A1(M). Our new university has three, one in Sydney and two in Western Australia, up to 4000km away. The part of John's job that requires trips to Fremantle is either on hold or happening electronically.

Finding a new church is also on hold. When we were living in the city, we went to a service at the Anglican Cathedral, but had postponed active 'church shopping' until we were settled in the lower Blue Mountains. But places of worship are now closed here as they are in the UK. However, we write this the Sunday after Mothering Sunday, when we watched the first of the Tring Team Parish online services, and felt instantly connected back to Tring. Thanks to the clergy team for that! John has also been talking with his brother by Skype more often than he ever did when they lived barely 100 miles apart. So we are experiencing first-hand how the silver lining to the COVID-19 cloud is how technology can bridge the gap of distance between us.



Our love and best wishes to all friends and 'church family' back in Tring – stay safe!  
**John Lippitt and Sylvie Magerstaedt  
Sydney, Australia**

[www.tringteamparish.org.uk](http://www.tringteamparish.org.uk)

### Tring Team Parish

Aldbury, Long Marston, Puttenham, Tring and Wilstone Churches.

As we have had to suspend public worship and close our churches, we are discovering new ways of being "Church"

Please visit our improved website for everything you need,

Services - Resources - Pastoral Care Support - And Much More!

### Contact - we are here for you!

It's ok to contact any of us

**Team Rector** Revd Huw Bellis 01442 822170 or 07411483229 [huw@tringteamparish.org.uk](mailto:huw@tringteamparish.org.uk)

**Team Vicar** Revd Jane Banister 01442 822170 Long Marston and Wilstone: [jane@tringteamparish.org.uk](mailto:jane@tringteamparish.org.uk)

**Team Vicar** Revd Michelle Grace 01442 851200 Aldbury: [michelle@tringteamparish.org.uk](mailto:michelle@tringteamparish.org.uk)

**Curate** Revd Sarah Marshall 07538 888502 [sarah@tringteamparish.org.uk](mailto:sarah@tringteamparish.org.uk)



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### Pastoral Care and Support

We are here for you, please contact any of our clergy. - Keep in contact with church friends - Prayer support and resources - Protecting your mental health, lots of ideas about staying focussed and in balance.



The Foodbank in Tring Church is open on weekdays, 10am - 12noon, to collect food and to drop-off food donations. [www.dens.org.uk](http://www.dens.org.uk)



## Behind the Iron Curtain



Like several readers of Comment, I spent a part of my working life visiting the countries of the former Soviet bloc. I hope that these reminiscences might prove

interesting during this time of having to spend most of the day at home. As these took place in the 1970s, well before the days of mobile phones and emails, I used to disappear for several days with very limited communication, leaving Margaret, with two young children, to hope that I would return.



One of my memorable visits was to the Leipzig Fair in what was then East Germany. During the exhibition, we had a half day free and decided to visit Colditz to see the famous castle, which at the time, was being used as a psychiatric hospital. We parked in the main square and walked up the hill to look into the castle courtyard. When we turned around, we could see my car, which appeared to have a white blob on the tailgate. Reaching the car, we realised that somebody had removed the GB sticker and the white blob was the only clean part of my dirty white estate car. When the fair was over, I had to return to the UK via West Berlin so I could visit the Free University, which was in the Russian Sector. As I had the car full of equipment, and knowing that the car would be

strip-searched when I returned through the wall at Checkpoint Charlie, we decided to use two left luggage lockers at Tempelhof Airport. We emptied the equipment into them, and I drove to the university, my colleague remaining in West Berlin. After the meeting and lunch, I returned to Tempelhof Airport, having had the car thoroughly searched on the way. (I always carried a small crosshead screwdriver so I could remove the two screws which held the back seat in position).

We reloaded the car and set off for home via Ostend, thinking that the worst part of the trip was over, but we spoke too soon. After passing Cologne, we drove into a blizzard and had to creep along the autobahn as we could only see the fences at the side and a short distance ahead. Not surprisingly the customs officers on the border refused to leave their nice warm cabins to inspect our paperwork. The snow lasted for a couple of hours until we had passed Brussels and almost reached Ostend. Happily, the remainder of the journey passed without further incident.

Many of my trips involved visiting two to four places at a time. One such trip consisted of visiting Moscow, the Brno Fair in what was Czechoslovakia and Budapest. I had left Margaret and our children in Germany, visiting her old school friend, and was driving to Prague Airport, intending to leave the car there, fly to Moscow and back and then drive to Brno. My first problem was that I used to take library books with me to read during the evenings or when I was stuck in the hotel waiting to be called to an appointment. When the customs officer was checking my luggage, he spotted that one of the books had a picture of the Kremlin on the cover and was obviously a



spy story. He studied it for what seemed a long time, my heart starting to beat faster, and then passed it back with a grin on his face.

Arriving at Prague airport, I parked the car and went to check in for my flight. When entering or departing an Iron Curtain country, the stamp in the passport showed the



method of transport. When the check-in operative checked my passport, he asked where my car was. I showed him that I had a return flight booked for three days later and explained that I was then going to the Brno Fair. He said that I must leave my Green Card and registration book with him and I could collect them when I returned. I thought that I would never see them again and, on my return, it took over an hour and great deal of persistence to retrieve them.

During another trip, I was about to leave my hotel in Prague for the airport to fly to Budapest for a day's meetings and then fly to Moscow. I was just using the facilities when my briefcase was stolen as I washed my hands. Whilst my passport was in my pocket, the briefcase had my airline ticket, my Russian visa and my prepaid voucher for the Moscow hotel. I rushed to the airport and bought a single ticket to Budapest, caught my plane and on the next morning, made a desperate call to the office back home. A colleague contacted British Airways to organise a replacement ticket, dashed to the Russian Embassy in London to obtain a copy of the visa and to the travel agent to organise a replacement voucher. He then went to Heathrow and arranged for the visa to be hand carried on the Budapest flight. I arrived at the airport, having had dinner with a client, and found that the plane crew had gone to their hotel. I then had to persuade airport security to unlock the plane and retrieve the visa. The voucher arrived thirty-six hours later, just as I was leaving the hotel to fly home thus avoiding the need to pay my bill and have the hassle of trying to get my money back from a bureaucratic system.

These are just a few of the memories of an export salesperson. If you have any tales of similar 'interesting situations', please share them with Comment readers.

**Ted Oram**  
**St Peter & St Paul**

# Colombia, more than coffee & cocaine!

As I mentioned in a recent Tweet of the month, I spent eight days in Colombia in January this year. When I mentioned I was going on holiday to Colombia, my colleagues had varying reactions from: 'don't bring back any packages for people', no doubt a reference to the drugs out there; to 'try not to get kidnapped', a reference to when it was seemingly the kidnap capital of the world. While the drugs are not entirely out of the picture, their stranglehold on the people there has diminished significantly and kidnapping seems to have reduced as well. (For those who don't know where it is, Colombia is at the north-west corner of the South American continent.)

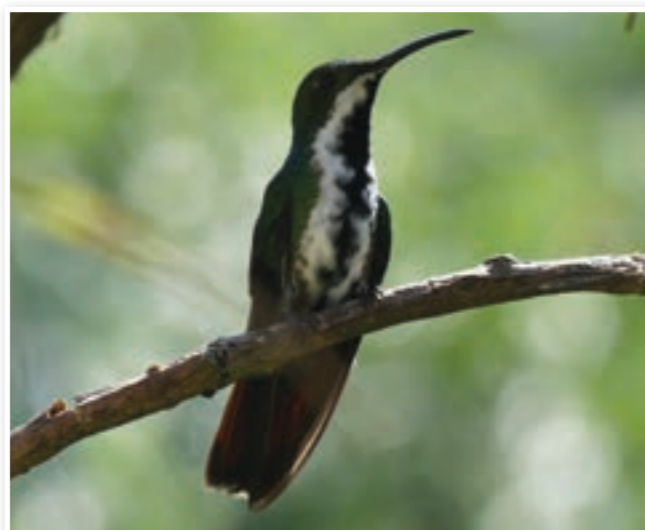
Colombia is famous for more than just Coffee, Cocaine and Kidnapping. Keen global birdwatchers know it is the country with the most species of birds seen within its borders – more than 1,850 different species and rising. Also, more than eighty bird species are endemic to Colombia and so can't be seen anywhere else in the world. It is perhaps surprising, given its size, that Brazil doesn't have more bird species. However, Colombia is ideally placed to share species in common with Central America as it shares a border with Panama. It also has an isolated range of mountains in the far north and the Andes splits into three fingers which serve as ecological barriers resulting in different species occurring in the highlands of these three fingers as well as the valleys in between. Add to this the lowland part of Colombia that forms part of the Amazon basin and so it shares species with Brazil, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela, and this leads to unrivalled bird species diversity within its borders.

In common with most Central American and other South American countries, the habitats are largely separated by altitude and so in the space of a few miles you can go from lowland forest which is hot and humid up to the cold Paramo. The Paramo is the zone between the tree line and the permanent snow line in the Andes and looks like alpine meadow, boggy ground or areas covered in low shrubs. In Colombia this zone was between 3,500 metres (11,500 feet) and 4,500 metres (14,800 feet) above sea level. On the day I visited the Paramo it was cold enough to have hail coming down so a bit of a change from being hot in a tropical rainforest! It is not all rainforest though as there is tropical dry forest, tropical humid forest

(Rainforest), montane humid forest of the Andean foothills and subtropics, and finally the temperate montane humid forest (cloud forest) that occurs just below the Paramo. It is quite something to drive up through fog and realise when you break through it that you have actually just driven through clouds and you are looking down at them!

One of the bird families that exemplifies this diversity is the Hummingbird. Of the 360 Hummingbird species found on Earth, 163 are found in Colombia and eight of these are endemic. In my eight-day visit I saw forty-five species of Hummingbird, six of those I had not seen before and one of the six was an endemic – the curiously named Buffy Helmetcrest! In Colombia only the Tanagers and their allies, totalling 177 species, are more diverse. However, many of them do not look like Tanagers at all, whereas all of the Hummingbirds look like Hummingbirds and they are endlessly fascinating and beautiful birds. For a change, Hummingbirds are also birds we have had a positive impact on in recent times.

When travelling in Central and South America, one of the features of the birdwatching trips I have been on has been the Hummingbird gardens.



Black-throated Mango

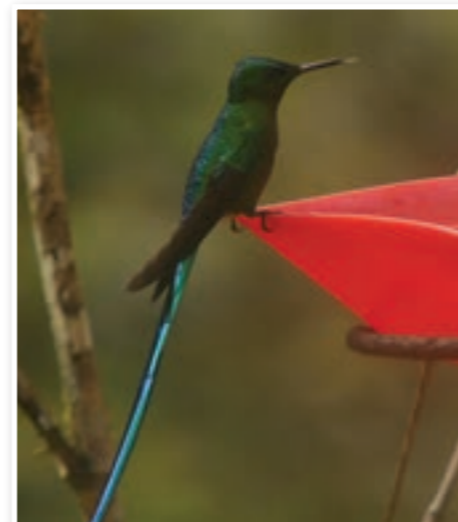


White-necked Jacobin

This is a relatively recent phenomena in historical terms and it is when people decide to put up feeders full of sugar water. These feeders are often cylinders with a bowl at the bottom and holes that vaguely resemble flowers – although I don't think that makes much difference to the Hummingbirds to be honest. Possibly of more importance is the fact that these plastic flowers are normally red, as the birds associate this colour with good sources of nectar. Some people started with a few feeders and got carried away and others saw it as a potential tourist attraction so put up large numbers from the outset. Because of Colombia's recent history it is fair to say that its tourist industry is relatively new and Hummingbird gardens have only come into existence in the last ten years. However, their importance to the Hummingbirds and birdwatchers cannot be overstated. More than 95% of the Hummingbirds that I saw in Colombia were at feeders and all of the gardens

visited had spectacular numbers of birds – most having over 100 individuals of ten or more species. The people who own these gardens often don't take holidays, or if they do, they get someone in to top-up the feeders while they are away to maintain the food supply that some of these birds have no doubt become dependent upon.

The trip to Colombia started



Long-tailed Sylph

with a flight to Bogota, nestling in the Andes mountain range at an altitude of 2,640 metres (8,660 feet) above sea level. To put this into perspective, this is almost twice as high as Ben Nevis – the highest mountain in Britain! We passed straight through Bogota and took a short flight to Cali to the south-west of Bogota and only about 1,000 metres (3,281 feet) above sea level. This was about the lowest place I visited in the whole trip as our group gradually visited areas of increasing altitude culminating in a visit to the Paramo on the penultimate day of the holiday.

After arriving at Cali Airport, and waiting a couple of hours for my luggage to arrive on the next flight, we headed out of the city to stay at a small lodge not far from the city. Finca La Lolita is about 1,900 metres above sea level and so is mid-altitude. It is a lovely lodge and, while not a Hummingbird garden, it had feeders up that were constantly busy. We stayed here for two nights.

Theoretically this altitude is above where you'd expect to see White-necked Jacobins as they are normally found from sea level up to an altitude of 1,500 metres. However, this didn't stop them being the commonest Hummingbird at Finca La Lolita, although when we went higher, we stopped seeing them. They are named after the Jacobins, an order of monks, because they have a hooded appearance resembling the cowled habit that the monks wore (no doubt a precursor to the hoodies worn today!) It is called 'white-necked' because of the white stripe across the back of the adult male's neck. It is a species I have seen in a number of countries in both Central and South America. As you can see, it is

beautiful, distinctive and easy to pick out, no matter how many Hummingbirds are about.

Another of my favourite Hummingbirds also found at Finca La Lolita was Black-throated Mango and it is found from sea level to 1,900 metres above sea level and so was about as high as it should get. I first saw this species on Tobago on a trip to see John and Mary Payne Cook when they were living on St Kitts in 2002. The name always fascinated me and I assumed its name was somehow derived from the Mango, but apparently this is just a coincidence and nothing to do with the tree/fruit of the same name. As a Hummingbird it is unusual in that the female is striking and more distinctive than the male. It has white underparts with a large irregular black stripe that starts at its throat and goes all the way down to the tail which has a distinctive large purple patch on it. By comparison the male is mainly green but also has the eponymous black-throat, which is not as obvious as the female's stripe and tends to merge with the green plumage that surrounds it.

Next day we visited Finca Alejandria which is slightly more than 2,000 metres above sea level and so is mid-altitude. Finca Alejandria is definitely a Hummingbird garden with so many feeders they have numbers next to them so that you can easily and quickly find the feeder a particular Hummingbird is visiting. It is possible that the slight increase and altitude and change in habitat accounted for the change in Hummingbird species and this was the only place I saw Blue-headed Sapphire and Fawn-breasted Brilliant, but getting decent photos of these proved impossible. However,

it was also here that I saw Long-tailed Sylph for the first time on this trip and this beautiful bird certainly lives up to its name. If you look in a dictionary, a sylph is an imaginary air spirit and it is most certainly long-tailed. The tail also has the added bonus of looking metallic when it catches the light as it has in this photo. It is found from 1,500 metres to 2,900 metres above sea level and lives on the edges of forests and woodlands which explains why it liked the open forest clearing that Finca Alejandria is situated in.

On leaving Finca Alejandria we then descended into the Cuaca Valley, visited a wetland habitat called Sonso Lagoon, and then stayed in a Hotel in Buga at just under 1,000 metres; but this was just a normal hotel in a large town with no feeders and no real avian interest.

*To be continued...*

Roy Hargreaves  
St Peter & St Paul

## A viral alphabet for Spring 2020

- A** is for **anxiety** and **ability** to **adapt**
- B** **Boris**, our beleaguered P.M.
- C** **children**, cooped up at home
- D** **dogs**, glad to see more of their owners
- E** **Easter** and **exercise**
- F** **frustration**, but also for **fun**
- G** **grief** for the victims
- H** **hospital staff** & hard-working **carers**
- I** **imagining** you are some-where else
- J** **jobs** that have at last been done
- K** **kindness**
- L** **lockdown** and **love** given and received
- M** **metres** we must measure between us
- N** **Nightingale Hospitals** erected at speed
- O** **Online** keeping us in touch with each other
- P** **prayer** and **poems**
- Q** **quarrels** at home & the **Queen** speaking up
- R** **radio** with endless information
- S** **shopping** with patience and **skies** that are quiet
- T** **together** in facing this international distress
- U** **unusual** insights while things are so quiet
- V** **valour** by workers in the face of the virus
- W** **walking**, but not far from home
- X** **X-rays**
- Y** **youth**, fed up but helping
- Z** **Zoom** letting us engage in groups from afar

Margaret Whiting  
St Peter & St Paul

# Our recent visit to the Holy Land



Last September my wife and I took part in a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. I had been putting off such a trip for several years as I was concerned about safety. But

last September we felt quite safe and secure. We travelled with a group from the Birmingham Catholic archdiocese and there were fifty of us in total. Canon Mervyn Tower who led the pilgrimage was extremely knowledgeable and I would not hesitate to recommend future pilgrimages he may lead (he has visited the Holy Land forty times).

stairs! The grotto is a holy place and, on leaving, the feeling one had was one of great peace.

The most holy of all the Churches is of course the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. This Church has been erected over the actual sites of the crucifixion and the tomb of Our Lord (again located in a cave). As one enters the Basilica there is the Stone of Anointing, denoting and symbolising the place where Jesus' body, having been



taken down from the Cross, was laid and anointed for burial. The Church was quite crowded when we visited and we had to queue. But the crowd was like no other. It was not a throng of curious sightseers, but rather a reverend group made up of Christians who had travelled from all over the world to venerate

this holy place. Custody of the Church is divided among Armenians, Greeks, Copts, Catholics, Ethiopians and Syrians. Every day the Church is unlocked by a Muslim keyholder, a task that has been performed by a member of the same family for several generations!

Jerusalem, like Bethlehem, is built on a hill, and travel from there to the Dead Sea in the Jordan Valley is quite an experience. One descends from a height of 754m above sea level to a depth of 423m below sea level, the lowest point of land in the world.

One goes from a temperate climate to one that is sub-tropical. Just north of the Dead Sea is the site commemorating the baptism of Jesus and, further north still, the Jordan has swelled to form the Sea of Galilee. It was here, of course, that Our Lord spent a great deal of his

ministry and it was a spiritual experience to look out from a boat on the Sea of Galilee which he knew so well, and to view such a peaceful and lovely scene. In our Lord's day the Sea of Galilee was one of the busiest centres of life in the country, and the western shore was ringed with towns and villages, so it made good sense for him to spend much of his ministry there. Our visit to the Sea of Galilee was perhaps the highlight of the trip for me. We went to the Church of St Peter's Primacy by which there is an impressive statue of Jesus asking Peter to 'Feed my sheep'. We visited Capernaum and the site of the house of Peter, where Jesus stayed, and we saw the remains of the 4<sup>th</sup> century synagogue, built alongside the original 1<sup>st</sup> century synagogue in which he had preached. We visited the Basilica of the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor, and the Church of the Beatitudes on the Mount of Beatitudes – it was on a hill like this, perhaps this one, where Jesus preached his famous sermon on the mount. We went also to the Church of the Multiplication commemorating the miracle of the loaves and fishes and the feeding of the 5000.

We visited so many other places in the Holy Land too, even sitting for a while and meditating in the Garden of Gethsemane.



We stayed in a hotel in Bethlehem, in the West Bank, for five nights and at another in Tiberias, near the Sea of Galilee, for the last three nights. Our hotel in Bethlehem was five minutes' walk from the Basilica of the Nativity so we went there on our own several times. The Basilica is rather plain from the outside, unlike what you would expect for such an important Church. Remarkably it survived the Persian invasion of 614, this being down to a mosaic on one of the interior walls. The mosaic featured the three wise men and seeing that they were Persians the invading army spared the Basilica. It is the oldest Church in the middle east today.

Descending into the grotto of the nativity I was surprised to find this was originally a cave, a place where animals were kept in Our Lord's time and not at all like the stable we so often see featured on Christmas cards today. One man was lying prostrate on the floor in front of the place marked by a star where Jesus had been born. My first feeling on seeing the man when we descended to the grotto was that he had fallen down the

The declining Christian population in Palestine (currently just two per cent) must be due to the difficulties of living there, and, I understand, even Muslims are leaving. My wife and I took a taxi to see for ourselves the situation that some Palestinians have to endure. We went into the Aida Refugee Camp near Bethlehem which is partly surrounded by the separation wall that divides the West Bank from Israel proper. At the entrance is a large key over the roadway, representing the key to the door of their family home that Palestinians were forced to flee before and after the creation of Israel in 1948 took with them in anticipation of their eventual return. Palestinians are unable to leave this area, even to enter nearby Jerusalem, without express permission.

Today's small Christian population of the Holy Land are the descendants of

the first witnesses of Jesus, and we were able to visit authentic Christian sites because of them. They need our pilgrimages and our support as otherwise these sites could disappear. So I would urge everyone to take a trip to the Holy Land while they are fit and able to do so and when the restrictions caused by the coronavirus have been lifted. It will, as for me, make them reflect on and wonder even more at the amazing events we read about in the Bible and hear about in Church services today. And I am sure that like me they will afterwards consider it to have been their trip of a lifetime.



Father David, Parish Priest of Corpus Christi Church, Tring & Sacred Heart Church, will be leading a pilgrimage to the Holy Land from 13-20 October this year. For further information, please contact [tring@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:tring@rcdow.org.uk).

**Michael Demidecki**  
Corpus Christi Church

## Fairtrade Tombola



Tring's Justice & Peace Group held a Fairtrade Tombola on Saturday 14 March, at Tring Farmers' Market. Local shops, café and restaurants

gave generously, and we had a fantastic selection of prizes. We were able to have lots of conversations about Fairtrade and encourage people to think about their purchasing and encourage them to 'shop local' too!

The Justice & Peace Group meet monthly to plan local events with a global concern. Find out more at [www.justiceandpeacetring.org](http://www.justiceandpeacetring.org) or follow us on Facebook. If you are interested in joining the Justice & Peace Group, please contact Michael Demidecki on 07887 980004, 01442 823514 or [michaeldemidecki@gmail.com](mailto:michaeldemidecki@gmail.com).

**Polly Eaton**  
High Street Baptist Church





# Tweet of the month

Literally the day after I got back from Cornwall, the gospel reading at the service was John 3:1-17 and Huw Bellis mentioned verse 8 'The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.' Huw then went on to say that in Greek the same word is used for wind and spirit and went on to say more about the Holy Spirit.

While I was in Cornwall it was pretty windy on several days so I spent some time seawatching. Seawatching is time spent on land looking out to sea for any passing seabirds – usually in brisk to strong onshore winds. Sometimes I think it is called seawatching because you spend your time just looking at a bird-free sea and not seeing any birds – certainly this was my experience of seawatching when I was a boy. Fortunately, seawatching in western Cornwall is more eventful than this and in March this is certainly the case with Manx Shearwaters just arriving back in British waters in numbers from their wintering grounds off Brazil and Argentina.

The first full day in Cornwall

there was a brisk south-westerly wind so I ended up at Porthgwarra and specifically at Gwennap Head – the most south-westerly point on the British mainland. It is an excellent spot to see Manx Shearwater and many other seabirds such as Gannet, Fulmar, Guillemot and Razorbills, so I was optimistic. Sure enough, on my first scan of the sea I saw a Shearwater, but instead of a black and white Manx Shearwater, this bird appeared all dark – it was a Sooty Shearwater – quite a surprise in March. Indeed, this was the second Sooty Shearwater reported in 2020 and only one more has been reported in Britain up to the end of March. Sooty Shearwaters are usually seen in Britain in August to early November and like Manx Shearwaters are trans-equatorial migrants, although Sooty Shearwaters go south and breed in the southern hemisphere from November to May and are common around New Zealand, Australia and the southern tip of South America. So seeing one in early March was a real surprise.



On my last full day in Cornwall there was a strong north-westerly wind, so I went to Pendeen to seawatch and, sure enough, this was a good decision as I eventually watched a juvenile

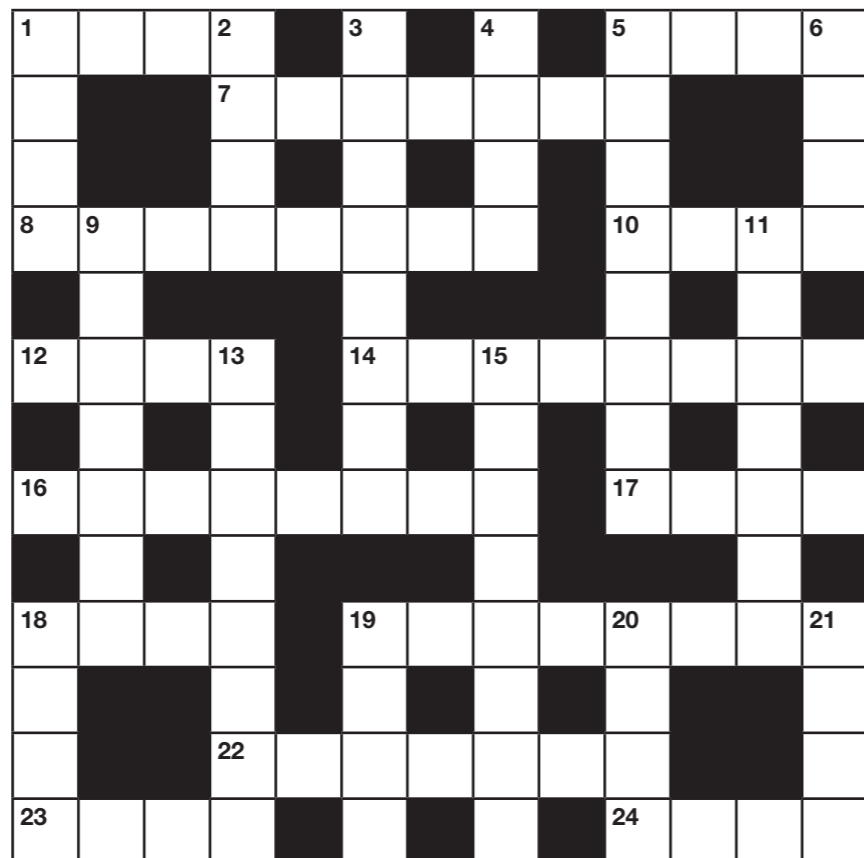
Iceland Gull fly west past me about ten metres away from me – a really good view for a seawatch. Iceland Gull is a winter visitor to Britain and actually breeds on Greenland and only winters on Iceland. The photo is of a juvenile Iceland Gull I saw in Newlyn harbour on the same holiday, as the one that flew past was too quick for me to photograph it!

Going back to Huw's sermon, these two birds demonstrated perfectly people's responses to the Holy Spirit by their actions. The Iceland Gull was working against the wind in much the same way as some people go against the Holy Spirit. By contrast the Sooty Shearwater had clearly used the wind to travel great distances in the same way as some people are guided by the Holy Spirit. Go with the wind; go with the Holy Spirit.

Roy Hargreaves, St Peter & St Paul

# Crossword

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>ACROSS</b>                                   | <b>DOWN</b>                               |
| 1. Very long periods (4)                        | 1. Commanding written work (4)            |
| 5. Church seats (4)                             | 2. Urge into action (4)                   |
| 7. Very well liked (7)                          | 3. Letters of the N.T. (8)                |
| 8. Sections of repeated music (8)               | 4. Sign of approval (4)                   |
| 10. Raised platform for lessons and prayers (4) | 5. Famous parable '.....' son (8)         |
| 12. Stated (4)                                  | 6. Waters of the earth (4)                |
| 14. Entrance to a cemetery (8)                  | 9. Anti-Christian (7)                     |
| 16. Member of a Jewish sect (8)                 | 11. First part of a Eucharist service (7) |
| 17. Pay attention (4)                           | 13. Length of an event (8)                |
| 18. A tie (4)                                   | 15. Space in a woodland (8)               |
| 19. Something that feeds on a host (8)          | 18. Jesus '....' of the Jews (4)          |
| 22. Sin or crime (7)                            | 19. Deep breath (4)                       |
| 23. Smile (4)                                   | 20. Basic growth of a plant (4)           |
| 24. Mother of Jesus (4)                         | 21. Simple (4)                            |



Answers on page 35

# In memory of William (Bill) Carpenter

William Brodie Carpenter (better known as Bill) was born in Harrow in January 1935, the son of Mary and Eric Carpenter. Bill was the eldest of four with two brothers, Simon and Mark, and a sister, Mandy. As a child during the war, his father's work (as a dentist) was essential, so he was not evacuated, and he stayed at home with the family. He recalled that in the garden, they had an Anderson shelter, which frequently flooded!

After time serving National Service, he took on an apprenticeship at De Havilland Aerospace, where in 1956, he was awarded apprentice of the year. He met his bride to be, Rosemary Bird, at a Young Conservatives dance in 1955. On 6 June 1959, he and Rosemary were married. They were a devoted couple. Last year, the family celebrated Bill and Rosemary's 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary at St Peter & St Paul's Church. It was a wonderful occasion, which we as a family look back on with fondness and thanks.

Rosemary and Bill went on to have four children, Penny (1961), Philip (1963), Tim (1966) and finally Teresa (1971). Eventually Bill and Rosemary became 'Grandma and Pa' to nine wonderful grandchildren, Matthew, Stuart, Laura, Joshua, Hannah, Nathaniel, Thomas, Alexandra and William (now aged 33 to 8). They all recall enjoyable and memorable days out with Grandma and Pa, particularly at Whipsnade Zoo, of which Bill was a fellow. He was an animal lover, and he liked visiting the Meerkats and the lemurs at the zoo best of all! Laura recalls happy afternoons painting with Pa, and Josh recalls discussions about recent Dr Who episodes, but Pa always insisted that William Hartnell was the best!

The family lived in Sandridge and Bovingdon, and then, in the late '70s, Bill became drawn to the ministry. He was ordained in 1979 and in 1980, they moved to Hemel Hempstead. The house

needed a lot of renovating, and luckily all the family were there to help out. Bill worked as a non-stipendiary deacon, then priest, at St Mary's Church in Hemel Hempstead, a large church with a thriving family-centred community. This was a very happy family time, and Bill and Rosemary always had a busy happy house, with friends popping in and out. In 1982 he proudly gave his eldest daughter, Penny, away at St Mary's Church.



Bill and family then moved to St Etheldreda's Church, Hatfield, where he worked as a priest, working particularly with the youth club, and with families. Many members of this parish remember Bill and Rosemary with incredible fondness, and are grateful for the love and support that they offered. The family were also part of church life: Phil helped with the youth work and Teresa joined the Church Choir. Bill and Rosemary always worked together, with Bill attending to parish duties, whilst Rosemary helped with the social aspects of the churches that they worked in. Bill ran pilgrimages to the Holy Land and to Jordan, and 'Team Bill and Rosemary' were a fantastic crew. Many parishioners went on

pilgrimages with Bill and Rosemary more than once.

Bill and Rosemary, Tim and Teresa moved to Reading in 1988, where Bill was Priest in Charge, and then Vicar of St Andrews, Caversham. The parishioners wanted to call him Reverend' and 'Father Bill' but he always just wanted to be known as 'Bill'! Again, the members of St Andrews remember Bill with fondness, and his photo still adorns the new wing of the Church complex. Whilst there, he also directed some musical productions, assisted musically by Tim and others, these included 'Joseph', and 'HMS Pinafore'. Bill gave Teresa away at her wedding at St Andrew's Church in July 1996.

Bill retired in 1999, and Bill and Rosemary moved to Tring. Rosemary recalls how welcome they felt, as they arrived there. The church was in an interregnum, and Bill was happy to help cover the busy schedule during this time. In true 'retired' Vicar style, he wasn't ready to retire just yet! He enjoyed being part of the team at St Peter & St Paul, as well as the church at Wigginton. Bill and Rosemary had a very happy retirement, and they enjoyed being part of the church and community here in Tring. Sadly, Bill's dementia started to become clear in the last six or seven years of his life. In 2019, he moved permanently to Lime Tree Manor Care Home in Adeyfield, where he appreciated the many visitors who came to see him during his short time there. He especially enjoyed lots of chocolate deliveries!

Bill passed away peacefully on Palm Sunday, 5 April, after a short illness. The warm and lovely tributes that Rosemary and the family have received in recent days and weeks have helped keep his memory alive, and we are grateful for the happy memories and warm recollections of his life. Many thanks to you all.

Teresa Hore, daughter

# My friend, Bill Carpenter

I have just learnt that Bill Carpenter died on Palm Sunday. He was a lovely man and a St Peter & St Paul 'character'.

I first had close contact with Bill when he took on the job of chairing the new budding Hall Committee, when no other wanted the job. He held the fort and, of course, the Hall went from strength to strength with Barbara as

mainstay and secretary assisting Bill.

Bill was somewhat unconventional, with no airs and graces: that was his strongpoint. Everyone could talk to him; he was one of us: not a teacher, not a provider of faith, other than through his example. He was, to me anyway, very down to earth. He always gave the illusion that he was one of the

'naughty boys' when, in reality, he was a very good man and served the Tring community well.

Bill and I 'got on' and he will be sadly missed.

We send our deepest and heartfelt condolences to Rosemary and her family.

Mac Dodge, St Mary's, Stromness

# Real-life stories from DENS

## Jayne's Story

I moved to Hemel Hempstead in the late 80s and set up a nail salon. Business was booming and life was good. I had three adorable children, and everything was going to plan; in fact, everything was perfect!

Then lots of salons were popping up everywhere. My takings were down, and with three children to look after, it was becoming impossible to keep afloat. During this time, I noticed I was drinking more. Drink had become my way of dealing with troubles.

My debts continued to rise and eventually, when I had nothing left to sell, I was declared bankrupt. I lost my house, I'd fallen out with family, and the friends I had were just drinking buddies; there was nobody to turn to. Soon after, my marriage hit the rocks and by 2017, I had absolutely nothing to my name. In fifteen years, I had managed to lose everything.

I felt completely alone. My depression started to take a grip and I couldn't see any hope. I took some pills



and alcohol and woke up four days later in hospital. Later on, after another failed suicide attempt, I was back on the ward. I knew the only people who could help me now was DENS. A few years ago I'd been living in a beautiful home with my beautiful children and here I was, about to move into a hostel.

At first, I was scared, but I soon felt safe and supported. The Elms hostel staff were incredible. They built me back up and helped me see a way forward. I was allocated a key worker and also attended a 12-week 1-2-1 therapy program which was so beneficial for me.

DENS helped me rebuild my life. I now have a place of my own, a place to call home. I volunteer at a community café giving me a routine and more importantly, a purpose. If it wasn't for DENS, I'd be dead, it's as simple as that. DENS supported me through my darkest time and helped me when I was at rock bottom. Life now looks very much brighter.

## Become a Friend

By giving as little as £10 a month to DENS, you can become a friend of DENS. Your contribution will enable our services to provide vital support to those most in need; whether they are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, today and in the future. Go to [www.dens.org.uk/get-involved/become-a-friend](http://www.dens.org.uk/get-involved/become-a-friend).

# Stop Press

## Nell Goodman

We are very sorry to announce the death of Nell Goodman on 17 April after a brief stay in hospital. Nell reached the grand age of 93 and had been involved with High Street Baptist Church since the 1940s, including as Sunday School Superintendent for many years and also running a Women's Fellowship for decades!

Nell was also involved with the town and local church life in this time and many Tring people will have very fond memories of her. She was a leading light in Churches Together in Tring events and for years she organised the Women's World Day of Prayer. In the past, she was also a supporter of the annual Holiday Clubs that ran. She was a member of both RAFA and the Royal British



Legion. At one time she organised the Poppy Appeal for Tring and continued to collect for the Appeal for over twelve years. In more recent times she organised the Lent lunches for CTT and was a regular attendee at Prayer Breakfasts.

With the current restrictions, in the short term the funeral will be a private family affair. However, we intend to hold a Thanksgiving opportunity as a church in due course once lockdown is lifted, and will advise the details once this is possible.

We would appreciate your prayers for Nell's family and the wider church at this time: she will be missed, but we do rejoice that she is now with her Lord.

**Kevin Rogers, Joe Egan, Ruth Egan  
High Street Baptist Church**

## Brian Lewis Robinson

21 July 1936 - 28 March 2020

### Artist and Gardener

Jackie and her family would like to thank friends and neighbours for the many kind cards, messages of condolence, and offers of support since Brian died. A beloved husband, father, stepfather and grandfather, he will be greatly missed too by his neighbours in Malting Lane, Aldbury.

The burial took place on 15 April but because of the current crisis, his life could not be celebrated fully. When the opportunity arises, the Robinson family intend to share memories and anecdotes at that later date.

Jackie wishes to also thank the members of the Village Support Group for the additional help given to her at this time.



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## COMMENT DEADLINES

- 1 January
- 1 February
- 1 March
- 1 April
- 1 May
- 1 June
- 1 August
- 1 September
- 1 October
- 1 November

## Crossword puzzle answers From page 32

### ACROSS

1. EONS
5. PEWS
7. POPULAR
8. CHORUSES
10. DAIS
12. SAID
14. Lychgate
16. PHARISEE
17. LOOK
18. KNOT
19. PARASITE
22. OFFENCE
23. GRIN
24. MARY

### DOWN

1. EPIC
2. SPUR
3. EPISTLES
4. PLUS
5. PRODIGAL
6. SEAS
9. HEATHEN
11. INTROIT
13. DURATION
15. CLEARING
18. KING
19. PUFF
20. STEM
21. EASY

# CHARITY ORCHESTRAL CONCERT

IN SUPPORT OF TRING PARISH CHURCH HERITAGE FUND

SATURDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER 2020, 7.30PM

Parish Church of St.Peter and St.Paul, Tring



LEADER: MARION GARRETT • CONDUCTOR: PATRICK GARRETT  
SOLOIST: ANNA LE HAIR - PIANO



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